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VALDEMAR KARKLINS

The Tunnel

THE ARLBERG TRAIN was approaching the most picturesque stretch of scenery between Bregenz and the Arl Pass. It was a fine day; the passengers, even those who had grown up in these valleys and had seen the mountains innumerable times, craned their necks to gaze out of the window to the right where view upon view of a travel-poster beauty unfolded before their eyes. Some time went by before they noticed the man who sat silently in the corner by the window, sunk into himself and paying no attention to the mountain scenery.

The compartment was narrow and so crowded that a young man in Tyrolese costume and with bare knees stood with his back against the window on the left where nothing could be seen but naked rock, and a fat little girl squatted on her mother's basket on the floor. People sat so tightly packed shoulder to shoulder and hip to hip on the hard, straight wooden benches that they could scarcely move or raise their arms. A farmer and his wife sat there, both middle-aged, and two youngish women—the fat girl's mother, tall and bony, and a smaller woman, rather plump, with dark eyes and hair; there was a very stout man, dressed in rough grey homespun: he was reading a newspaper and his face was hidden from view. At the end of the row, by the window where nothing but a wall of brown rock was to be seen, there sat an elderly, rosy-faced couple, keeping a little apart from the others. They had a rather dignified air and their clothes were new and well-made, probably they were townspeople travelling to Innsbruck or Salzburg. Yes, and across the narrow passage, on a seat apart, by the door which served also as a window, there sat the silent, dark-complexioned man, the prisoner-of-war whom nobody noticed because he differed in no way from other prisoners-of-war whom people had got used to seeing in trains. Perhaps there was a difference, though, a certain look in his eyes. But it was only later that the passengers became aware of it.

The electric train rushed along the curving rails, rumbling and

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clattering as if the axles and wheels had not been oiled all through the war. But people forgot the noise as they looked out of the window, and the peace of sun-lit mountains streamed into the compartment. Sometimes, the valley formed a narrow ravine, and the mountains cast a blue shadow down into its depth; in other places it opened out to a width of a few miles, and there were hamlets and houses nestling in its warm, green lap. The walls of rock on the opposite side were clear and distinct; but lightly coloured air played across the bottom of the valley, gently shimmering in the sun, and the houses, the fields, men and beasts seemed to sway a little—like pebbles and shells beneath clear, swift water. As they gazed out of the window, the townspeople felt a light, airy sensation in their breast, and it seemed to them that one might easily fly across the valley even without wings. But the farmers looked at the tiny, dwarfed figures, dotted about the green meadows down below, and at the toy-like barns which were scattered across the slopes, and they thought of the weather and of hay-making.

"Ah, beautiful fatherland," said the bony woman, the girl's mother, and her thick, solid features relaxed into gentle wistfulness. "What happiness it must be to see it again after years away from home!" With a moist look, she regarded the prisoner-of-war by the window.

"Yes. . . . There's no place like one's own country," the plump, dark-haired woman remarked in the same tone. Her black eyes rested for a moment on the prisoner-of-war's expressionless face, and she sighed. "They are lucky, those who are still alive and can come back. How many have been left behind, dead, lying in foreign soil!"

Both women had the rather deep but melodious voices of mountain-dwellers; every word was clearly audible in spite of the noisy train. Now the other people in the compartment glanced at the soldier by the window, and at that moment they noticed the look in his eyes.

A few months ago this home-coming had still been something new, the first happy experience after the grim years of the war. People had been hoping for it desperately, longing for it to happen, and then it came: the French Government released the Austrian prisoners-of-war, and groups of them began to return.

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Their names were announced over the radio and in the newspapers a day or at least a few hours before their arrival. At every station people gathered to meet them, there was an enthusiastic welcome, relatives embraced, sisters and wives were in tears, neighbours waited to shake hands, there were gifts and surprises: the happy ending of a long drama, enacted upon a hundred small stages against the majestic backcloth of mountains bathed in the golden summer light. Gradually the excitement subsided. The relatives of the local mountain-dwellers had either returned or they had been expected in vain. Those who still kept arriving were mostly strangers; in order not to be sent back to what was now the Russian Zone, they had lied and said they had relatives in the Tyrol. These men chose some station at random, alighted from the train and wandered aimlessly about, taking care to avoid the offices of the French occupation forces, trying to find work, begging for food, and occasionally stealing. The local people felt pity for them but regarded them with suspicion as they went by: they were dirty, their clothes tattered and soaked with sweat, their footwear falling to pieces, and they were exhausted, starving, sick. Many people would have liked to help them, but nobody had any food to spare; and, anyway, how could one be sure that their clothes were not crawling with typhus-carrying lice. They dragged themselves along, seeking, hoping; after all, they were young and, if they were lucky, a war widow tired of loneliness might take a fancy to one of them and let him stay with her.

All the people in the compartment looked at the prisoner-of-war who sat by the window. Nobody spoke; the stout man lowered his newspaper and peered across it, regarding him through a pair of cheap glasses with metal frames. Then they dropped their eyes or turned aside, feeling a little uncomfortable; the stout man returned to the perusal of his newspaper. Yes, he was one of those. He sat slumped forward as though his shoulders were weighed down by unforgettable misfortunes; his faded, shabby uniform was crumpled and filthy as if he had only the day before been lying in a muddy trench; he was dirty, he had not shaved for three or four days—yes, he was like the rest of them. His face was brown, tanned by sweat and sun, a youngish face, almost handsome if the jaw had been less prominent and the upper lip not quite so narrow and drawn in—features which gave the Tyrolese their characteristic

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goat-like expression. Perhaps he was also from the mountains, though of a different locality. But there was a peculiar look in his eyes, dark and yet burning with a strange fire, and when people met his gaze they had to lower their eyes. He gave the impression of a wild creature glaring out of a cave; although the carriage was flooded with light it seemed as if the soldier's unblinking eyes were glimmering in the dark.

Once more, the passengers looked out of the window. Perhaps they knew it by the position of the sun or perhaps they saw smoke rising from chimneys in the valley: suddenly they realized that it was time for lunch, and they all felt hungry. There was still a certain awkwardness about such a situation, people still remembered the war years when it was uncomfortable to eat in trains because of the hungry looks of one's fellow-passengers. In those days one used to nibble secretly at sandwiches wrapped in paper, holding them in such a way that no one could see what they were made of: some people did not even have dry bread. But, now it was no longer a crime if one could afford a few things.

The farmer and his wife were the first to eat. The stoutish, sunburnt husband climbed on the bench and took his rucksack from the rack above; his small, thin wife extracted from it a knife, a home-baked loaf of bread and a lump of butter, She buttered a slice, handed it to her husband, and cut another one for herself. They ate, bent forward, their heads lowered, never looking about them, as if to show that it was nobody's business what they were doing. The plump, dark-haired woman took a box of cakes out of her large handbag and ate slowly, with evident relish, now and then licking her lips or her fingers. The townspeople unwrapped thinly cut sandwiches of white bread, and a strong smell of good cheese immediately pervaded the compartment. They did not touch the sandwiches with their hands but held them between crackling grease-proof paper. When they had finished eating they wiped their fingers in a napkin. The husband pulled a flask, encased in fine brown leather, out of his coat pocket and slowly, as though performing a solemn ceremony, unscrewed first the shiny top and then the dainty little silver cup underneath, filled it carefully and drank from it; then he filled it for his wife. They sipped with the pleasure of connoisseurs, closing their eyes and slightly pursing their lips with contentment or the strength of

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the liquid. The whole compartment filled with the heady fragrance of good brandy, and the men knew at once that it was genuine French cognac. Yes, nowadays one again encountered people who knew how to live, who got on well in the world; it was no longer necessary to hide one's wealth as one did during the lean years, though there still were many people who barely eked out an existence. The young man in the Tyrolese jacket, standing close-by at the window, stepped from one foot to the other, looking out although there was nothing to be seen; finally he pulled an apple out of his trouser-pocket and bit into it with strong, white teeth, his mouth watering.

The tall, broad-shouldered woman made the girl get up from the basket, took out some brown honey-cake, crisp pretzels and a bottle of milk; they both began to eat. The girl stood before her mother, now and then doing a little hop and skip with her straight, fat legs, munching the salty pretzels and drinking milk from the bottle. The train gave a lurch, and milk spilled down her chin.

"Pour it into your mouth, silly, don't pour it on your chest," the mother told her off in an undertone and wiped the girl's chest with a checked handkerchief. The damp patch on the light-coloured dress attracted the attention of the other passengers, and they involuntarily noticed that the little girl had breasts. She was young, only ten or twelve years old, with a round face, narrow eyes and a wide mouth; her hips and her straight, fat legs were still those of a child, but, strange, she already had breasts, not fully developed, rather like little mounds of fat, yet plainly visible. The young Tyrolese with the bare knees stared for a while at the damp spot which the mother was rubbing with her handkerchief; then he turned away.

It would be difficult to say who noticed it first, but suddenly it seemed to all the passengers that the food they ate was turning dry in their mouths and sticking in their throats: there are looks which one can feel even without raising one's eyes. Simultaneously, they all remembered something, and an uncomfortable silence spread through the compartment. The prisoner-of-war's hungry eyes seemed to be counting every morsel they ate.

The plump, dark-haired woman made the beginning. She took a fresh sandwich from her bag, got up and offered it to the

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prisoner-of-war with a few polite words. He gave a start, as if frightened, and raised his head; murmuring something that sounded like gratitude, he began to eat. Instantly, all the other passengers in the compartment burst into activity, the ice was broken, they hurriedly rummaged in their bundles, bags and pockets and gave him whatever they each had: cakes, slices of cheese, eggs, sandwiches. The elderly lady produced an orange from her elegant leather case. The buxom, dark-haired woman, her red lips smiling, stood for a while beside the prisoner-of-war and watched him eat; when she turned to go back to her seat she put her hand on his shoulder, as if by accident. The man ate with an air of indifference, he did not hurry himself, but everything he was given disappeared quickly in his mouth. The expression in his eyes, though, never changed; something like hunger went on smouldering in them. Perhaps it was hunger, but of a kind that could not be appeased with bread; or perhaps it was no longer possible to appease it at all.

Suddenly they all felt a desire to speak. A bond had sprung up between them; they experienced a warm rush of exhilaration. Giving bread to the hungry made them feel nobler and better, and this moved them to such an extent that the women were on the verge of tears. Only one passenger had given nothing to the prisoner-of-war: the stout man who was eating bread while he read the newspaper he had spread across his knees. One of the women asked him whether he was not going to give the soldier anything, but he said indifferently: "I? Why should I? He hasn't asked me," and continued reading his paper. It was impossible to tell from his expressionless face and slow, imperturbable voice whether he was a miserly egoist or some odd character who had his own way of looking at things. Nobody bothered about him; such a small discordant note could not impair the general feeling of sympathy and pity which flooded the compartment with greater warmth even than the afternoon sun shining in through the window. The women leaned closer towards the prisoner-of-war and tried to enter into conversation with him; they felt that they already had a certain share in his life or at least the right to know something more about him. They asked where he was going and where his relatives lived. But the prisoner-of-war merely mumbled something from under his nose, and even those sitting

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closest to him could not make out what he said; he continued eating, stuffing his mouth full of food, until he had eaten everything they had given him. Then he again sat silent and motionless, with drooping shoulders, his dark, hollow face empty of expression, and stared like a wild creature out of a cave. His behaviour seemed strange, but after a while it dawned upon the women that there was an obvious explanation for it.

"Yes, the things they had to go through," the broad-shouldered, bony woman sighed, holding the fat girl between her knees. Having eaten well, the girl looked tired and drowsy. "My husband . . . he also came home from France recently. Oh, the terrible things he keeps telling about!"

The plump, dark-haired woman sitting next to her said thoughtfully: "Yes. . . . But they are lucky, all the same. My husband will never come back. He fell in Italy, at Monte Cassino."

"Lucky?" The tall woman raised her head. "Don't say that. One dies only once, and then one has peace, one doesn't suffer any more. But there are sufferings that are worse than death, ten times worse. My husband tells me . . . "

"I can't understand how it is possible," the small, stocky farmer chimed in. "It is said that the French are a civilised nation. But the way they treated their prisoners, well, savages wouldn't do things like that. Really, I can't understand it."

"Hatred," said the young man in the Tyrolese jacket. "Blind, animal hatred. The French hate us."

"My husband says they were taken prisoners in the Ardennes, in the last big attack, and they were marched off to a camp somewhere in Brittany, I don't remember the name of the place. Sometimes they went by rail, but mostly they had to march, hundreds of kilometres. Through countless villages, and it was the same everywhere. They were so exhausted that they could scarcely drag their feet along, and in every village they had to run the gauntlet. The narrow streets full of people, and all like wild beasts. Curses and stones fell on them like hail, and chamber-pots were emptied over them from the windows. They held with their hands over their heads, but many were hit by bricks, and they fell down and were left lying there. And the guards did not do anything, they only grinned. And so it went on, from village to village, for hundreds of kilometres."

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For a moment all the passengers in the compartment were silent, conjuring up this picture of utter horror. Then somebody looked out of the window where bluish mountains gleamed in the sunlight, and exclaimed: "A waterfall!"

"A waterfall," cried the girl and ran to the window, stumbling over the stout man's outstretched legs. "Where is it? I want to see the waterfall!"

The tall, broad-shouldered woman continued: "And in the transit camp almost half of them died from starvation and diseases. They were cooped up behind barbed-wire fences, several thousands of them. And while they were waiting to be distributed among different camps they got nothing to eat for a whole week. They ate grass. Something had gone wrong with the supplies, or there were too many of them, and nobody bothered their heads about them. Perhaps it was done out of revenge, how can one tell. But they got nothing to eat, for a whole week or more. They ate grass. My husband was there himself. Many of them died from starvation and diseases, and others went mad."

Nobody spoke. The wheels of the train clattered and rumbled.

"I can't understand it," the farmer said again. "Surely the French are a civilised nation."

The stout man remarked behind his newspaper: "Perhaps our side did the same. Such is war."

"We'd never do such things," exclaimed the young Tyrolese. It was evident from his indignant tone that he had been a soldier himself. "War can be humane, too." He glared in the direction of the stout man, but his angry glance merely came up against the newspaper.

After a while, when the conversation had already been forgotten and nobody any longer expected him to answer, the stout man, preoccupied with his own thoughts, said: "Humane!" And after a few moments, with a short laugh, he exclaimed: "Humane war!" But nobody paid any attention to him, and he did not speak again.

The train entered a short tunnel, the carriage seemed to plunge down a well, darkness roared outside the windows; then the noise ceased and daylight poured into the compartment, so brilliant and sudden that it dazzled people's eyes.

The passengers were still turning over in their minds what the woman with the large hands and feet had told them about the

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prisoners running the gauntlet, the men eating grass. Now they regarded the prisoner-of-war with different eyes; he was no longer a stranger; caught up in the warm flood of sympathy, pity and kindness, they felt he had become one of them, closely related and dear. In a way, this was one of life's rare moments of perfect beauty: the hearts of these people—strangers thrown together by accident—were as pure, bright and at peace as the valleys, brimming over with light and the tranquillity of the heavens, which lay along the road they all pursued together. One after the other, they again rose from their seats and gave whatever each still had left to give. The women opened their handbags and produced sweets and chocolate they had saved up for the children; the young Tyrolese pulled out a box with a few cigarettes and put it into the prisoner-of-war's pocket; and the townspeople exchanged glances, consulted in whispers and gave him a few marks. The buxom, dark-haired woman gazed at him for a long time and said in a slightly choked voice: "What he must have been through! Poor soul. Who knows whether he still has a home; many of them have lost all their relatives." But the prisoner-of-war kept silent, his deep-set eyes burning, his dark brow lowered, as if he did not understand anything that was being said. He remained alone, cut off from the rest who all felt purer and nobler because this day they had given more than they had ever done, and their faces showed how moved they were—except the stout man who stolidly perused his newspaper, turned it over and began to read another page.

"Two waterfalls," cried the girl, flattening her nose against the window-pane. "A big one and a little one!" She was cramped for space where she stood, the fat, clumsy child; she fidgeted and fussed and pushed against the prisoner-of-war's legs, and when the train suddenly gave a lurch she accidentally sat down on his knee.

"Come here at once," her mother called, but the girl pouted and whined: "I want to see! Can't I stay here? I want to see the waterfalls!"

"All right, stay there, but sit quietly, don't prance about." And the prisoner-of-war, without glancing at her or raising his head, put his arm round the girl to steady her.

The train had to pass through two tunnels in quick succession.

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The railroad was a technical masterpiece: the train ran along a narrow ledge which hugged the mountainside, a bluish-green precipice falling steeply away to the right and a greyish-brown wall of rock rising into the clouds to the left. At times the train scurried into a black opening which went straight through the centre of a hill. The electric bulbs were either burnt out or had been removed because of the blackout in the war years, and the passengers had to sit in darkness when the train made its way through the tunnels; but they were used to it.

The engine gave a long-drawn whistle as it approached the tunnels; the sound, thrown against the wall of rock, echoed and reechoed dully as though caught within a huge empty barrel. When the train once more emerged into daylight the sun on the mountains seemed so bright that it momentarily blinded the passengers. Blinking, they suddenly noticed that the look in the prisoner-of-war's eyes had lost its strange fixedness; his gaze was keen, animated, and his face perceptibly flushed. He sat close to the window where the sun shone upon him with full force; his eyes devoured the plump, flabby girl sitting on his lap; he held her round the waist, and thick, whitish veins stood out on the back of his hand which looked moist and hot. The stout man lowered his newspaper; he looked in the direction of the prisoner-of-war and the girl, and his brow slowly furrowed with suspicion and mounting anger. The darkness of the tunnel had interrupted his reading; perhaps he was thinking of something unpleasant he had seen in the paper. He did not say anything.

Again the engine gave a whistle; there was a signpost by the roadside—"Arlberg Tunnel, 10,126m"—and this time the carriage passed into prolonged darkness.

The passengers waited, silent, with growing impatience. Their feeling of fellowship died away; oppressed and suffocated by the dark, they each were alone once more and beset by vague fears. It seemed as if this time the tunnel would never end. Then the train slackened its speed, soon it barely crawled, and finally stopped altogether.

Far ahead in the distance the outline of the engine could be seen against a faint glimmer of light, and there was the sound of quick, hurried voices. Perhaps workmen were repairing the line, and the train had been stopped by their red signal lamp, or perhaps freight

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was being unloaded. The passengers sat and waited in the dark compartment, desultorily talking in undertones. For a moment, which seemed interminable, nothing at all could be seen or heard; there was only the darkness. The summer day with its white sun and blue mountains, the sky with its lightly drifting clouds, the valley and its verdant meadows—all had vanished as suddenly and completely as if they had never existed. Silence and darkness bore down upon the passengers with the massive weight of the ten-mile stretch of mountain above them. Someone with a lantern ran along the train towards the engine. The lantern rocked to and fro, and faint yellowish light flickered across the brown and grey rock which looked like the wall of a cellar. Heavy, resounding footsteps hurried past. Far ahead, a whistle blew, and the train began to move. All noises, however familiar, sounded strange and hollow, doors of compartments shut with the finality of heavy lids being slammed down; the shrill sound of iron and the droning of the rails were like a child's screams, a sick man's groans. Very slowly, light began to dawn outside the windows; then, faster and faster, the train approached the white, radiant day. As the compartment blazed into light the large, broad-shouldered woman screamed: "Hannerl! Where are you? Hannerl!" All eyes turned to the corner where the prisoner-of-war had been sitting with the girl.

The seat by the window was empty.

They all started to their feet; getting in each other's way, they ran up and down the carriage—all, except the stout man who remained sitting with outstretched legs. But they already knew that they would find neither the girl nor the prisoner-of-war. In a flash they guessed what had happened and, however incredible and frightful it was, they somehow felt they had foreseen it all. While the mother was still lamenting and wringing her hands and the others were searching the carriage, the young man in the Tyrolese jacket had already leaped across the stout man's legs and pulled the alarm signal. The train had not yet gathered speed, and it stopped a short distance from the tunnel.

They jumped out, and ran. At first the tall woman was ahead of them all; she took long strides, screaming, flinging her arms about, her clothes and hair streaming in the wind. But when she entered the tunnel she was already tired out, and the young Tyrolese overtook her. The farmers, the stocky, sun-burnt man and his thin

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wife, followed close upon his heels; they were no longer young, and their movements were heavy, but they were good runners. Behind them came the plump, dark-haired woman, clutching her handbag—she had not forgotten it, not even in the hurry and excitement, she had obviously learnt to look after it in the war years. The townspeople brought up the rear. They did not run, they followed at a distance and placed their feet carefully for the ground was uneven and full of stones; there was no path there, people ran along the bank of rubble at the side of the tunnel or jumped from sleeper to sleeper.

After a few hundred yards it became almost completely dark in the tunnel. When they looked back they saw a circle of light far behind them—as though they were glancing down the long barrel of a gun; when they looked ahead they saw the rails faintly glimmering in a mysterious rosy light somewhere far away. They ran through the darkness, stumbled, fell, rose again, and ran on. They could not see anything where they were, but they all had the same picture imprinted upon their minds: framed in the dazzling mountain sun, the prisoner-of-war sitting by the window, his burning eyes devouring the girl, holding her with a trembling hand.

"Hannerl!" the mother shouted at intervals, her voice shrill, almost metallic. "Hannerrrrl!" Her cry beat against the stone walls of the narrow tunnel and died away in the dark.

"Quicker," panted the young Tyrolese, "quicker!"

When they had forgotten the daylight, and when their eyes got used to the night which lay beneath the mountain, the tunnel was no longer completely dark: there was a suffused, reddish twilight ahead of them, something like the reflection from a dying fire. The young man was the first to reach the spot where workmen had been repairing the line; a lantern burned dimly on the ground, and another on the wall. He snatched up the nearest one and ran deeper into the tunnel. It could not be far now.

The yellow light of the grimy lantern flitted across the blocks of brown and grey rock which lined the tunnel on both sides and hung so low overhead that it looked as if the ceiling might collapse at any moment. The tunnel was damp and chilly; winter seemed still to lie in hiding here. The brown rock was patchy with greyish rime, and some of the grey stones seemed bedewed with perspiration. Moisture had gathered in the crevices between

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the stone slabs; it was black and shiny like tar and, in other places, thick and brown like blood. Water kept dripping from the ceiling, and cool drops occasionally fell on the hot brows of the people who ran on and on.

"Hannerrrrrl!" the mother screamed, breathless, half suffocated with fear. And at long last there was a faint answer, barely audible. It was impossible to tell from which direction it came, whether from above, behind, or in front. They stopped, listened, and ran on.

Then they caught sight of something light-coloured, perhaps a discarded piece of clothing, or a newspaper thrown out of a passing train. But the mother recognized it from far off, and she flung herself forward and overtook the Tyrolese.

The girl was half lying, half sitting, her back against the wall of rock; she was crying. Her fat, round face was pale and dirty, she had been rubbing it with muddy hands, and her hair fell over her eyes. Her white woolen stockings had slipped down her calves, and one leg was bleeding. Choking with tears, the mother threw herself down beside her and stretched out her big hands to clasp the girl to her.

Both men stopped, panting and gasping; their breath condensed into grey clouds in the cold, damp air. The light of the lantern fell upon the girl, and they looked at her, their mouths open, their fists clenched.

"What a brute," the stocky farmer said softly. "What a swine!"

"Where is he?" asked the young Tyrolese, bending over the girl. "Where's he gone?" He was hot and out of breath, but his face looked almost white, and the muscles in his jaw twitched. The girl could not tell him anything; it was dark, she had not been able to see.

"I can't understand how a man can be such a scoundrel," said the farmer, shaking his head. "And we shared our food with him. What a villain."

The young man raised the lantern above his head and looked around him, but the weak yellowish light did not reach far. They went backwards and forwards, held their breath, and listened. They breathed, and clouds of steam stood in the cold air, filling the space of light around the lantern. The girl sobbed and pressed her face into her mother's wide skirts.

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Suddenly the earth and the walls of the tunnel began to vibrate, and drops of water were shaken off the ceiling. The tremor increased, and the stone foundation on which they all stood seemed to heave like a horse beneath its rider. A train was approaching; clanging and thundering, it shook the narrow tunnel and filled it with a hideous din. It was going in the opposite direction, from Salzburg to Bregenz. For a short moment, as the train bore down upon them, they thought they would all be run over—there seemed to be no room to stand out of its way. The headlights of the engine plunged the tunnel into glaring white light. They clung to the damp walls of rock and let the train pass.

At that moment they saw him. He jumped out of the shadows, a bare fifteen or twenty paces from where they stood, and tried to leap onto the running train. He was plainly visible, outlined against the lights of the engine and the sheaves of white sparks which tumbled against the angular walls of rock. He ran out of the dark, crouched like a cat, and jumped.

The train had slightly lowered its speed as it entered the tunnel, but even so it was still going fast. This was a bold leap. For an instant it seemed that he had succeeded: he had caught hold of a door-handle and was trying to gain a foothold. But he was violently swung against the side of the carriage, the weight of his body wrenched his fingers from the door-handle, and he fell to the ground. Rarely would anyone have found courage for such a leap; the prisoner-of-war had the courage, and he might have succeeded if the train had been going less fast. But he did not succeed; he fell to the ground, rolled over, and lay motionless.

And now at last they had got him. Still running, the young Tyrolese bent down, picked up a stone and threw it. The stone caught the man's leg; he groaned with pain and doubled up, clasping his knee in both hands. He tried to get up and run away, but he could not; perhaps he had injured himself as he fell. Another stone hit him in the chest, and he sank back, his head against the wall of the tunnel. But the girl's mother was already upon him.

Spitting and hissing, she clawed his face and hair. She would have scratched his eyes out if he had not quickly covered his face with his hands. She had flung herself upon the prisoner-of-war, her knees on his chest, her long arms twitching and shaking; she was beside herself, she scarcely knew what she was doing. The two

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men looked on and waited until she had tired herself out. The prisoner-of-war turned over, his face to the ground, and writhed like a large grey caterpillar; every time he tried to get up he fell back.

Then the stoutish farmer started to belabour him. He stood up beside him, bent forward and kicked his sides and back with his strong hobnailed boots, and when the prisoner-of-war rolled over the farmer kicked him in the chest and shoulders and wherever he happened to get at him; when the man raised his head he hit him with his fists. His movements were slow and unhurried, he hit and kicked methodically, grunting a little, much as if he were chopping wood or hoeing weeds in his garden.

The prisoner-of-war did not scream, but after each kick he groaned and rolled slightly sideways. The young Tyrolese had placed the lantern on the ground; he stood close by, bent forward as if ready to spring, and waited. When the farmer stopped the Tyrolese looked round for a weapon, a piece of wood or metal; but there were only the stones on which they stood, sharp-edged limestone and pieces of rock, materials used for railway embankments. As there was nothing else at hand they picked up stones and threw them, one after the other, aiming at the man's head and chest. The prisoner-of-war rolled and twisted on the ground, protecting his face and skull with his hands, and twitched convulsively every time he was hit. Whenever the men paused for a moment he hesitantly withdrew his hands from his face and stole a glance at them. In spite of the pain, his face was strangely expressionless; he seemed to accept the stones with the same indifference and docility as he had accepted bread from those very hands not long ago. Only his eyes glittered like a wild creature's.

To the chance observer it would have seemed that these people were participating in some weird ritual. The sooty lantern spread only a narrow circle of light, and nothing was visible but their faces and hands: white, trembling with hatred and cold fury. Their bent figures threw large shadows across the ceiling and the walls of the tunnel, and the dark, restless shadows spread out and contracted, rose and fell with the same hatred, the same intensity of fury, uniting the men who moved in the dank twilight as if caught up in a nightmarish dance around a fire in a cave.

The townspeople had by now also come up. They stood a little apart from the others as if to show that they had no share in what

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was happening, but they stood close enough to have a good view. There was no anger, no hostility in their faces; they looked surprised and rather disgusted—as a chauffeur might look when he steps out of his car and glances at some animal he has run over, a rabbit or a dog.

The girl had calmed down and was no longer crying. The men were bobbing up and down in front of the lantern, and the girl's face was indistinct in the shadows. The mother bent over her; they talked quietly.

"What did he do to you?"

"He . . . pressed his chin against my cheek," said the girl. "He has such bristles!"

"What else did he do to you?" the mother demanded. "Answer me!"

The girl put her finger into her mouth and thought for a bit. "He carried me. And then he fell, and I ran away. I ran and I ran. And I hurt my knee on the stones."

The mother was silent for a moment. Then she asked: "Why did you cry?"

"I was afraid of the darkness." She pulled her finger out of her mouth and began to sob. "And my knee hurts."

The men stood by the prisoner-of-war, straightening their backs. They breathed lightly and quickly, and their breath enveloped their heads in small grey clouds of steam. They were still angry, but they no longer raised their hands against him: they did not want to kill the prisoner-of-war and get into trouble over it. They stood and looked at him, not sure what to do next.

"What shall we do with him?" asked the farmer. "Shall we hand him over to the police?"

The mother quickly interposed: "No, better not. I don't want it to get into the newspapers, everybody would talk about it. She says he hadn't yet done anything to her. She ran away from him."

There was a short silence. The men were plunged into thought and scratched their heads.

"What a brute," the young Tyrolese muttered through his teeth, picking up the lantern. "I'd beat him, until—"

"Well, he's had his lesson. He'll remember it next time. Only, I can't understand how a man . . . "

The farmer's wife said: "It's the effect of the war. The whole place is overrun with criminals these days." She turned and glanced

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at the prisoner-of-war. "We must go back to the train. Are you going to . . . leave him here?"

"Let him rot," said the young Tyrolese with a contemptuous gesture. "I'm damned if I carry him."

They walked rapidly through the tunnel towards the exit, never once looking back, almost like running away, like trying to forget something. None of them noticed that a woman, the plump, dark-haired, black-eyed woman, had stayed behind with the prisoner-of-war. The light of the lantern gradually faded away in the distance. Now and then, as it lit up the stone walls, the tunnel seemed to expand and the grimy rock and the glistening drops of water on the ceiling were plainly visible; and then it contracted into a narrow space and sank into thick, shapeless darkness. As long as it was still possible to see by the light of the lantern the dark-haired woman wiped the prisoner-of-war's brow and temples with her handkerchief.

It had taken the conductor a long time to go from carriage to carriage. He found the stout man sitting alone in the compartment.

"Why did you stop the train? You'll have to pay a fine."

The stout man raised his eyes from the newspaper. "I didn't stop the train."

"But the alarm signal was pulled in this compartment. What has happened here?"

"I think a child fell from the train in the tunnel, and a prisoner-of-war seems to have jumped after her." The stout man reflected for a moment. "At least, that's what I think. But I'm not sure; one couldn't see anything."

"Did somebody go to find the child?"

The stout man nodded. "Yes, all of them."

The conductor opened the door, leaned out and shouted to the engine-driver. A whistle sounded, the train returned to the entrance of the tunnel, and stopped. They waited and waited; time dragged slowly on. Some of the passengers got out and walked impatiently up and down beside the train. The conductor stood leaning against the window; he wrote something in his note-book. At last voices were heard, and six, seven people climbed into the compartment—the townspeople, the farmer and his wife, the young Tyrolese, the mother and the girl. The stout man was still sitting

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in the same attitude, with outstretched legs. He did not look up; apparently he was not interested to know what had happened, he merely seemed to be annoyed because of the delay. They glanced coldly at him and climbed over his legs to get back to their seats; but none of them spoke. The train began to move; it gave a vigorous jerk, in a hurry to make up for lost time. The conductor spoke to the little girl's mother and again wrote down a few things in his note-book. As the train drew near a station the stout man folded up his newspaper and put it into his pocket.

"Conductor," he said, "give me my crutches. They are under the seat."

The conductor bent down and pulled out two long, thin, tubular metal crutches of the kind supplied by the army to war cripples. Slowly, with great effort, pushing first the one and then the other crutch under his armpits, the stout man rose. His broad face with its solid features turned crimson, and he breathed heavily. His massive body swung like a sack between the crutches; his long, lifeless legs hung down, his feet dragging on the floor. Without looking about him, he approached the door.

"Can I do anything to help you?" asked the conductor.

"No, you can do nothing to help me," said the stout man, slowly, cautiously climbing out of the carriage.

The people in the compartment gazed after him while the train stood at the station. Nobody spoke.

Some time went by until at last some railwaymen came along the tunnel, carrying a lantern and various tools, and they found the prisoner-of-war lying by the rails. The dark-haired woman was sitting beside him. Dressed in a thin summer frock, she shivered a little in the cold, damp air. The prisoner-of-war was breathing unevenly. The woman touched his shoulder.

"Can you get up?" she asked gently.

The prisoner-of-war opened his eyes and gave a start as he saw the light about him.

"I . . ." he muttered, "I . . ."

"Has he hurt himself?" asked one of the workmen.

The woman nodded.

They grasped him under the arms and helped him to his feet; the plump, dark-haired woman held him firmly, her arm around his waist. Her hand was warm and steady. One of the workmen

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supported him on the other side, and another man walked ahead of them with the lantern. The prisoner-of-war staggered and limped, reeling dizzily; now and then he groaned and almost sank to the ground. The woman took his arm and put it around her shoulder; now she could support him better, and it was easier to walk. But, even so, it took them almost half an hour until they reached the end of the tunnel. The workmen turned back, and the prisoner-of-war and the dark-haired woman went on alone.

"You'll come with me," she said, holding him closer; maybe she could support him better by holding him tightly, or maybe she was becoming bolder. Her voice was warm and full of sympathy, and it was already tinged with the joy of ownership, of organizing and managing. Her soft flank pressed against him as though she wanted to give him some of her warmth. "It isn't far to St. Anton, it's just ahead of us. There we'll wait for the next train. And then you'll come home with me. Or perhaps you'd like to rest a little?"

The prisoner-of-war started to speak, but his words were indistinct as though he were half asleep, on the point of waking from a nightmare. "I . . . I'm thirsty . . . water."

The woman glanced about her, but there was no house anywhere near, and they went on. They walked out of step, their arms about each other, and soon grew tired. The midday sun burned like fire, and there was no breath of air on the slope of the mountain. Beads of perspiration stood on their foreheads, and they could feel the damp flesh through their clothes.

The day was very different from what it had seemed when looked at through the train window. All nature was so saturated with sun and silence that it seemed there was no room left for feelings or thoughts. Reaching out towards Innsbruck, the wide expanse of the valley lay before them like a green bowl filled to the brim with blue and golden light. There were chimneys smoking far down below, and cars and horse-drawn vehicles rolled swiftly along the roads, but they were as tiny as ants, and no sound reached up to the shoulder of the hill. A large hawk floated in the light and the silence, casting an almost motionless shadow on the parched earth. Sweltering heat lay heavily on the slopes, and the snow on the mountain-peaks seemed to be melting in the hot blue day like silver in a huge blue oven. The silence was so great and lofty that human sorrow and anger, suffering and

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hatred seemed petty, dispensable, incredibly trivial; it was sufficient merely to be silent and to exist—like the mountains, the trees, the pellucid air.

"Tell me, dear, what you wanted with that girl," the woman said after a while, "with that child."

The prisoner-of-war hesitated and glanced about him as if afraid that he might be overheard; then he answered in a half-whisper: "They wouldn't have given her to me. She has already been stolen from me once. I know everything." There was a gleam in his eyes. "But I shall find her again."

The dark-haired woman did not stop, but she slowed down and looked in his face. It was streaming with sweat, and the furrows along his cheeks were encrusted with thin, dark streaks of blood. His eyes glittered.

"You are talking wildly," she said. "You'll have to rest for a long time. Perhaps you are in a fever."

He shook his head, and with an air of secrecy he leaned closer towards her and whispered in her ear: "They have stolen everything from me, Lottie and the girl, and the house, too. The house has also been stolen, there is only a hole left in the ground. But I shall find her, I have already been in Bregenz, and now I'm going to Innsbruck." He increased his pace, impatiently straining forward. "Don't you think that they took her away to Innsbruck?"

The dark-haired woman walked for a long while looking straight ahead; suddenly all pliancy and softness had left her, her legs moved stiffly. She slowly withdrew her arm and let him go; he had recovered his strength and was able to walk by himself.

"You have long black hair," he said amiably, looking at her. "Good that it wasn't burnt."

"Don't speak now," she said in a strange voice. "Come, I'll take you to the station and show you the way." She glanced back across her shoulder to where the railwaymen had parted from them, and then she gazed ahead, trying to judge how far they still had to go until they reached the station. She began to hurry.

They walked in silence, the woman a few paces ahead, the prisoner-of-war following. The sun burned more and more fiercely, and the railway lines ahead of them shimmered as though they were melting. It was no longer far to the station.

[*Translated from the Latvian by Ruth Speirs*]

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ANTHONY HECHT

Three Prompters from the Wings

Clotho: or, The Future

He rushed out of the temple
And for all his young good looks,
Excellence at wrestling,
High and manly pride,
The giddy world's own darling,
He thought of suicide.
(The facts are clear and simple
But are not found in books.)

Think how the young suppose
That any minute now
Some darkly beautiful
Stranger's leg or throat
Will speak out in the taut
Inflections of desire,
Will choose them, will allow
Each finger its own thought
And whatever it reaches for.
A vision without clothes
Tickles the genitalia
And makes blithe the heart.
But in this most of all
He was cut out for failure.

That morning smelled of hay.
But all that he found tempting
Was a high, weathered cliff.
Now at a subtle prompting
He hesitated. If
He ended down below
He had overcome the Fates;
The oracle was false;
The gods themselves were blind.
All lay in his power.

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(How this came to his mind
No child of man can say.
The clear, rational light
Touches on less than half,
And "he who hesitates . . ."
For who could presume to know
The decisive, inward pulse
Of things?)
After an hour
He rose to his full height,
The master of himself.

That morning smelled of hay,
The day was clear. A moisture
Cooled at the tips of leaves.
The fields were overlaid
With light. It was harvest time.
Three swallows appraised the day,
And bearing aloft their lives,
Sailed into a wild climb,
Then spilled across the pasture
Like water over tiles.
One could have seen for miles
The sun on a knife-blade.
And there he stood, the hero,
With a lascivious wind
Sliding across his chest,
(The sort of thing that women,
Who are fools the whole world over,
Would fondle and adore
And stand before undressed.)
But deep within his loins
A bitterness is set.
He is already blind.
The faceless powers summon
To their eternal sorrow
The handsome, bold, and vain,
And those dark things are met
At a place where three roads join.

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They touch with an open sore
The lips that he shall kiss.
And some day men may call me,
Because I'm old and plain
And never had a lover,
The authoress of this.

Lachesis: or, The Present

Well, there he stands, surrounded
By all his kith and kin,
Townspeople and friends,
As the evidence rolls in,
And don't go telling me
The spectacle isn't silly.

A prince in low disguise,
Moving among the humble
With kingly purposes
Is an old, romantic posture,
And always popular.
He started on this career
By overthrowing Fate
(A splendid accomplishment,
And all done in an hour)
That crucial day at the temple
When the birds crossed over the pasture,
As was said by my sister, here.
Which goes to show that an omen
Is a mere tissue of lies
To please the superstitious
And keep the masses content.
From this initial success
He moved on without pause
To outwit and subdue a vicious
Beast with lion's paws,
The wings of a great bird,
And the breasts and face of a woman.
This meant knowing no less

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Than the universal state
Of man. Which is quite a lot.
(Construe this as you please.)

Now today an old abuse
Raises its head and festers
To the scandal and disease
Of all. He will weed it out
And cleanse the earth of it.
Clearly, if anyone could,
He can redeem these lands;
To doubt this would be absurd.
The finest faculties,
Courage and will and wit
He has patiently put to use
For Truth and the Common Good,
And lordly above the taunts
Of his enemies, there he stands,
The father of his sisters,
His daughters their own aunts.

Some sentimental fool
Invented the Tragic Muse.
She doesn't exist at all.
For human life is composed
In reasonably equal parts
Of triumph and chagrin,
And the parts are so hotly fused
As to seem a single thing.
This is true as well
Of wisdom and ignorance
And of happiness and pain:
Nothing is purely itself
But is linked with its antidote
In cold self-mockery—
A fact with which only those
Born with a Comic sense
Can learn to content themselves.
While heroes die to maintain

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Some part of existence clean
And incontaminate.

Now take this fellow here
Who is about to find
The summit of his life
Founded upon disaster.
Lovers can learn as much
Every night in bed,
For whatever flesh can touch
Is never quite enough.
They know it is tempting fate
To hold out for perfect bliss.
And yet the whole world over
Blind men will choose as master
To lead them the most blind.
And some day men may call me,
Because I'm old and tough,
And never had a lover,
The instrument of this.

Atropos: or, The Past

Well, now. You might suppose
There's nothing left to be said.
Outcast, corrupt and blind,
He knows it's night when an owl
Wakes up to hoot at the wise,
And the owl inside his head
Looks out of sightless eyes,
Answers, and sinks its toes
Into the soft and bloody
Center of his mind.

But miles and miles away
Suffers another man.
He was young, open-hearted,
Strong in mind and body
When all these things began.

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Every blessed night
He attends the moonstruck owl,
Familiar of the witless,
And remembers a dark day,
A new-born baby's howl,
And an autumnal wetness.

The smallest sign of love
Is always an easy target
For the jealous and cynical.
Perhaps, indeed, they are right.
I leave it for you to say.
But to leave a little child,
Roped around the feet,
To the charities of a wolf
Was more than he could stomach.
He weighed this for an hour
Then rose to his full height,
The master of himself.
And the last, clinching witness.
The great life he spared
He would return to punish
And punish himself as well.
But recently his woes
Are muted by the moon.
He no longer goes alone.
Thorns have befriended him,
And once he found his mother
Hiding under a stone.
She was fat, wet, and lame.
She said it was clever of him
To find her in the dark
But he always had been a wise one,
And warned him against snails.
And now his every word
Is free of all human hates
And human kindliness.
To be mad, as the world goes,
Is not the worst of fates.

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(And please do not forget
There are those who find this comic.)

But what, you ask, of the hero?
(Ah well, I am very old
And they say I have a rambling
Or a devious sort of mind.)
At midnight and in rain
He advances without trembling
From sorrow unto sorrow
Toward a kind of light
The sun makes upon metal
Which perhaps even the blind
May secretly behold.
What the intelligence
Works out in pure delight
The body must learn in pain.
He has solved the Sphinx's riddle
In his own ligaments.

And now in a green place,
Holy and unknown,
He has taken off his clothes.
Dust in the sliding light
Swims and is gone. Fruit
Thickens. The listless cello
Of flies tuning in shadows,
Wet bark and the silver click
Of water over stones
Are close about him where
He stands, an only witness
With no eyes in his face.
In spite of which he knows
Clear as he once had known,
Though bound both hand and foot,
The smell of mountain air
And an autumnal wetness.
And he sees, moreover,
Unfolding into the light

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Three pairs of wings in flight,
Moving as water moves.
The strength, wisdom, and bliss
Of their inhuman loves
They scatter near the temple.
And some day men may call me,
Because I'm old and simple
And never had a lover,
Responsible for this.

Third Avenue in Sunlight

Third Avenue in sunlight. Nature's error.
Already the bars are filled and John is there.
Beneath a plentiful lady over the mirror
He tilts his glass in the mild mahogany air.

I think of him when he first got out of college,
Serious, thin, unlikely to succeed;
For several months he hung around the Village,
Boldly T-shirted, unfettered but unfreed.

Now he confides to a stranger, "I was first scout,
And kept my glimmers peeled till after dark.
Our outfit had as its sign a bloody knout.
We met behind the museum in Central Park.

Of course, we were kids." But still those savages,
War-painted, a flap of leather at the loins,
File silently against him. Hostages
Are never taken. One summer, in Des Moines,

They entered his hotel room, tomahawks
Flashing like barracuda. He tried to pray.
Three years of treatment. Occasionally he talks
About how he almost didn't get away.

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Daily the prowling sunlight whets its knife
Along the sidewalk. We almost never meet.
In the Rembrandt dark he lifts his amber life.
My bar is somewhat further down the street.

The End of the Weekend

A dying firelight slides along the quirt
Of the cast-iron cowboy where he leans
Against my father's books. The lariat
Whirls into darkness. My girl, in skin-tight jeans,
Fingers a page of Captain Marryat,
Inviting insolent shadows to her shirt.

We rise together to the second floor.
Outside, across the lake, an endless wind
Whips at the headstones of the dead and wails
In the trees for all who have and have not sinned.
She rubs against me and I feel her nails.
Although we are alone, I lock the door.

The eventual shapes of all our formless prayers,
This dark, this cabin of loose imaginings,
Wind, lake, lip, everything awaits
The slow unloosening of her underthings.
And then the noise. Something is dropped. It grates
Against the attic beams.
I climb the stairs,

Armed with a belt.
A long magnesium strip
Of moonlight from the dormer cuts a path
Among the shattered skeletons of mice.
A great black presence beats its wings in wrath.
Above the boneyard burn its golden eyes.
Some small grey fur is pulsing in its grip.

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JEAN GARRIGUE

Song for No Words

Usher the malcontents into a grove,
The withered shade of a grove,
Their god-forsaken muse
Has closed the book of the rose
And now they have no tongue to tell
What they knew and knew so well
They swore they would know it forever.
They do not. For they awoke
On the other side of the rose
What is the secret that they think
Only the thorns disclose?
Oh piercing nature of the rose!
Usher them into the grove
By the prospects of the moon.
Their muse has told them some such thing
As only a fool must learn
And it is bitter to have to say
My godforsaken muse
Is out of humor with me
And it is bitter to have to be
Tongueless now to tell
How it was or why
From every time-dishonored plot
The wolf and dog came back.
Usher them into the grove.
Their golden idols fell.
Let them pace livelong, nightly,
Between the boxwood walls and laurel.
Hands against their hearts pressed,
Let them weep and let them sing
Nasal, gusty chants to one
Who will be their sole sovereign.
May he stop their crying soon
With a little, sandy rune.

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The Rose Tree

I saw the rose tree in its bloom
And saw it when the bloom was gone
And the sight has made a want
Rift and seek its plumes in me

I do not ask the forever,
The terrible forever, of a rose tree
I know the blood may not run free
More than a second from mortality
But some secession from the flaw
I'd beg an instant of time's law

And wilder now on time's closures,
Time's dimensions, time's mazes
In the spired and stately park.
Time that will not seal the bud in amber
Nor that freshness and sweet bloom in any manner
Shield from its dusty cause,
Time that shakes the blossoms from the boughs.

Time, time, I say
There was an instant when delight
Lived for the pure rose tree
Then all became as one
With the rose tree in the sun
Time, and you were overcome
By such transparency.

Time, and let me dream
This instant may come again.

Invitation to a Hay

A settlement of love
Is what I'd risk if you would.
A central fountain and a horse,

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A little native elegance,
Some green-shuttered saffron buildings
And avenues of leaning trees
And an orchard close by
Divided from a field of hay
By a mouldering old wall
Snaking up a hill.
I'd have a garden primed
With beanflowers and chick peas
And in tubs lemon trees
Not to forget the marveled orange—
Where is a fruit so bright
And a stem so delicate?—
And days of blue air
That crowd the dark boughs of a grove
And other days as pale
As light in a birch grove—
Oh birch my very white
And delicate delight!
And back of us and all around
For the castle-haunting rooks
To fly to and fro from
The many-sided, dark-blue faced
Mountains, wrinkled, ravined, cleft
When they are not cast upon
By those pallors that beyond
Tell of a snowlight's origin.
And in this civil order
Ringed round by a wilderness
I'd have some very conical
And shaggy house of hay
To invite you in to stay
As long as butter-yellow walls pleased you
And there you'd be with me
We'd live in a monument of hay
Mad as those who know
In love is all fantasy.
Your breast would be of burning gold
And its delicious heat

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Would warm me day and night
While creatures of the wood
Might envy, if they could,
Our joy just as fine
As the improvising clouds
That as you look at them are gone
Or volatile as leaves in wind
Flying forth from us
Not to be contained.
We'd go bird-nesting in clouds
And hunting down the meadow grass
For flowers or the smallest haunts
Of the young fieldmice.
And in this ancient landscape
Preponderant with moss
Rambling walls and pine woods
Of narrow alleys at the end of which
Daylight stares starkly through
Our love alone would be new
Despite its ancient properties.
Ariel would we be
With love's finest courtesies,
By all that shapes of earth and air
Can subtilize the senses with
Until they have grown rapt
On emanations of a light
When fold on fold goes into
Five fathoms of a blue.
Our love would be endowed
By mountain and by cloud
So long as we would stay
Alongside such ravines
And such slopes of terraced vines
Broken towers and bells
In a shaggy house of hay.
My dear, and will you be
Content to dwell with me
Eating of illusion
Daily and nightly?

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ROY HARVEY PEARCE

Toward an American Epic

To the memory of Edward Niles Hooker AVTJB-VTEF)

I

ONE OF THE MOST ARRESTING yet practically unnoticed phenomena in the history of our poetry is the regularity with which there occurs an attempt to write nothing less than an American epic. The regularity is of an intensity such as to indicate a virtual compulsion to make such a poem—which is to say, to create such a form. Indeed, one can now say that this phenomenon is of a much more vital significance for the history of our national imagination than is that comparable phenomenon, the urge to create the great American novel. This is so because in order to do it right, to invent an autochthonous American epic, or—to say the same thing—a genuinely American analogue of the traditional epic, the poet would have to break radically with the very tradition which he would be trying to carry on and reinvigorate. He would indeed have, in Pound's phrase, to make it new. Confronted with a society which supplied him with no authentically American epic material, he would yet have to find that material, to transubstantiate what his society gave him so that he could transform it. And this, one concludes, is exactly what has happened—or, perhaps to put it more accurately—what has been intended to happen.

There is no point, at this stage, in trying to recite the history of the American epic; nor of trying to indicate precisely the limits of its achievement. In the present state of our knowledge, it would seem unlikely that such a history could be written, or if such evaluations could be made. Nonetheless, it is possible to establish the dialectic of that history and to begin to assess its significance for the more general history of our aspiration toward not only an American epic but an American poetry. I mean to make such an attempt here—to offer what amounts to a theory of the American epic and a summation of the sort of poetics it has striven so hard, so desperately, to put into action. I shall take as my exemplars

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three poems—*The Columbiad, Song of Myself,* and the *Cantos.*

These are heroic poems, but of a curious sort. For, instead of celebrating, affirming, and memorializing a hero, as the poet of traditional epic had done, the poet of the American epic (or, quite strictly speaking, proto-epic) tried and continues to try to create a hero. And his means to that creation was, and remains, the very act of the poem itself.

Barlow's *Columbiad* (1807), so dreary in what it is and so exciting in what it is not, is our first instance—and almost a negative one. *Almost.* For if Barlow could not write an adequate American epic, he could at least desiderate one—indeed, desiderate (and how shocked he would have been to learn this!) poems like *Song of Myself* and the *Cantos.*

As we all know, *The Columbiad* is an enlarged and improved version of Barlow's earlier *Vision of Columbus* (1787). The enlargements were by way of clarifying and articulating the idea of democratic order and progress which totally suffuses the poem. As it stands, the poem, so Barlow tells us in his Preface, is meant to celebrate the establishment of democratic order, inculcate its working in those who participate in it, and project its glorious possibilities into the future. Its aim, Barlow says, is "altogether of a moral and political nature." Specifically, he insists that his moral object far supersedes his poetical object. Only thus can he write the true modern epic, uncluttered with the base and false values of the traditional epic, those of *The Iliad* for example. His problem, hence, is to find a heroic center for democratic, progressivist values; and inevitably he fails utterly to do so. The poem begins epically ("I sing the Mariner who first unfurl'd/ An eastern banner o'er the western world/ And taught mankind where future empires lay . . . "). But in fact it is not Columbus's actions which are sung, but rather the inexorable progress of free institutions in the Americas as Columbus is given to envision them. To Columbus, desparing in prison, comes Hesper, the guardian Genius of the western continent, who takes him to a mount of vision. And the poem unfolds in a series of visions in which Columbus cannot be made to take part. Rather, he is tutored by his vision, as a person assuaged by an assurance that all will go off on schedule. He looks on at the origin of the new world, its native populations, Inca heroics, English colonization, the American Revolution—he

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looks on at all these and, now understanding something of the history and meaning of a national culture, is somehow changed. The vision is meant to do its work on him, as later in *Song of Myself* and the *Cantos*, the vision, the lived-through quality of the poetic experience, is meant to do its work on us. Columbus thus figures the reader, with whom Barlow makes him share his vision, as later Whitman and Pound themselves figure the reader, on whom they make their visions do their work. But, of course—and the contrast with Whitman and Pound makes it all the more obvious—Barlow is not poet enough to give his poetic rendering of Columbus's vision the power to work in this way. The quality of that vision is not substantial enough to make us accept Barlow's Columbus as a hero, as we can accept as heroes—even if we hate to—Whitman and Pound, or the *personae* who speak to us in *Song of Myself* and the *Cantos*. What is unfolded in the twelve books of *The Columbiad* are tiresome, insistent, intemperate, homogenized descriptions of places, people, and events—all of value only as they aspire (in *The Columbiad,* even the places are made to aspire) toward the reason, freedom, and joy of a new society in a new world. The poem, if we look at it closely enough, would have us see how history, as informing milieu and ambiance, literally creates its protagonists—or what is the same thing, creates the values which, as they are embodied by the protagonists of history, give them their worth.

To say this is indeed to look very closely at the poem. I do so here, and so briefly, because I want to remark those implications of Barlow's theory and practice which point the epic away from its traditional mode and function. If it is undoubtedly true that Barlow could write neither a traditional epic nor an adequate American equivalent of that epic, nonetheless he seems, in the act of writing a poem which fails to do what he wanted it to do, to have had a sense of one of the preconditions of the sort of poem which his hero-less culture needed. This precondition was a new poetics, deriving from a new use of imaginative language, this deriving in turn from a new language itself. Barlow's conception is two or three times removed from that of a poetics which would make the new epic immediately possible; but it is nonetheless there, however vaguely, however subliminally—a product, one assumes, of the very logic of his conception of the relation be-

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tween the American poet and his new world. It occurs as part of Columbus's utopian vision in Book X:

> *At this blest period, when the total race*
> *Shall speak one language and all truths embrace*
> *Instruction clear a speedier course shall find,*
> *And open earlier on the infant mind,*
> *No foreign terms shall crowd with barbarous rules*
> *The dull unmeaning pageantry of schools;*
> *Nor dark authorities nor names unknown*
> *Fill the learnt head with ignorance not its own;*
> *But wisdom's eye with beams unclouded shine,*
> *And simplest rules her native charms define;*
> *One living language, one unborrow'd dress*
> *Her boldest flights with fullest force express;*
> *Triumphant virtue, in the garb of truth*
> *Win[s] a pure passage to the heart of youth. . . .*

This is, on the one hand, an utterly simplistic view of one world as utopia. But it is, in the light of what came after it in the history of American poetry, something more: a description of the sufficient and necessary qualities of a poetic language which, at once carrying a vision like Columbus's and working on its reader as the vision is intended to have worked on him, will have given him a sense of certitude and authenticity, of being fully and creatively at one with his culture, of being defined as a person. This is indeed precisely how Columbus is said to feel at the very end of *The Columbiad,* and presumably how the reader is supposed to feel. It is beyond Barlow's abilities to bring about such a condition, of course. To have done so he would have to have created a radically new kind of epic—an epic which, in its very directness and overwhelming clarity, would have not subordinated poetic to moral purpose but would have made them one; one in which language, transubstantiating and transforming history and milieu, would, in its pure passage to men's hearts, have redefined Columbus's sense of himself and his world, and through him that of Barlow's readers; one which, lacking a traditional hero on which to center, would create him and make the reader participate in that creation. Barlow failed utterly, as we have always known. But we have not known how, in his very failure, he hit upon and tried

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to understand the necessary and sufficient conditions of an authentic and valid American epic.

II

It is as exemplars of that epic, with all its aspirations, commitments, compulsions, and excesses, that we must finally consider *Song of Myself* and the *Cantos*.

Consider the vexing problem of the form of *Song of Myself*. We have regularly made it out to have been more than it is, or have damned it for not having been so. But if only we consider it in the light of its status as a further stage in the development of that epic which Barlow so painfully desiderated, we can accept the poem for what it is and see how it breaks with all traditional canons of form, just so that it can do the job that an American epic would perforce have to do. It is as if Barlow's Columbus were allowed to have a vision which would demonstrably be his and his alone, not one which had been given to him; as though the structure of that vision were demonstrably the structure of his own native perceptions and his wilful resolution of them into meaning and significance. What the Whitman of *Song of Myself* (he is his own Columbus) does is to survey his whole world, his milieu and his ambiance—but not according to any necessary order and chronology. He looks when he wills and interprets as he wills. There is a dialectic here, but not a form. It is essential to the meaning of the poem that the dialectic be unique; for the dialectic derives from the very motion of the protagonist's sensibility. What is relatively stable and fixed, because it has no end and no beginning, is the world of which that sensibility becomes conscious, the world in and through which that sensibility would discover and define itself. The end of *Song of Myself,* the moral object which synchronizes with its poetic object, is to know that the world is there, and in the knowing, to know itself as there; in effect, through such a transaction to create itself and the possibility for readers to create themselves.

This is, quite briefly, how *Song of Myself* looks when, in gross outline, we trace that dialectic set by the rhythm of the sensibility:

1-5: The initial insight into the creative nature of the self and the initiating of creative power which follows spontaneously upon that insight.

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6-16: Recognition of the relation of the self to its world, and a seeking after the creative metamorphosis which follow spontaneously upon that recognition.
17-25: The roles of the self in and through its world; a return to the matter of 1-5, but with this difference—that self-knowledge now exists formally, a product not of sheer inwardness as in 1-5 but of a spontaneously formalized relation between the self and its world. Now the poet is not just a force, but a force defined in terms of its world; now he is fully a person and can even name himself: "Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son."
26-52: The poet (as person) fully at home in his newly defined world, fully sure of himself and his "procreant urge." He no longer needs to seek his world (as in 6-16); he can openly and lovingly address it as he creates and controls it and as he is created and controlled by it. He is thus a religion, God-like in himself. "I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I am encloser of things to be."

And this is, quite briefly, how the rhythm of sensibility moves in what we have marked out as the first stage of the poem's total dialectic, in sections 1-5: *Song of Myself* begins epically, but immediately (so sharply in contrast to the traditional epic that one is shocked into awareness of the fact that Whitman has found the tradition inadequate and so has rejected it) turns inward, demanding that its readers do likewise:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (1)

The whole first section establishes the dominance of the self when for the first time it is overpoweringly discovered; the language of the section is composed in such a way as to register the overpower. For example, all verbs in the section apply only to the self and its attributes. At the end Whitman writes:

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back awhile sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

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In this stanza the absence of verbs for the items named in the first and last lines absolutely subordinates them to the newly (or re-) discovered self. What follows in the next sections is a retailing of a complete absorption into the self ("I am mad to be in contact with me" [2]) and a sense that the self possesses "the origin of all poems"; an elucidation of the timeless "Urge and urge and urge,/ Always the procreant urge of the world" (3); a recognition of its difference from other souls ("But they are not the Me myself" [4]); and the final account of how the soul, turning inward upon itself, discovers its true nature:

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet. (5)

The passage of parallelisms which follows takes its energy from this apocalyptic moment. The items that are named are chaotically scattered in their natural habitat; but the force of the parallelisms is to unify and interrelate them by means of the newly initiated powers of the creative self:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And that limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke weed.

Thus, at the very end of this first phase of the discovery, creation, and transubstantiation of the sensibility, the self begins to turn outward toward its world and to unite with it in a heroic transformation. There begins a unique metamorphosis—unique be-

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cause through its transformation, the self best discovers what it is as self. The rest of *Song of Myself* projects the sensibility in the process of making that discovery.

I venture this quite foreshortened view of the dialectic of *Song of Myself* and of the rhythm of its first phase, because I want to point out just how the poem seems to be intended to do its job. What is particularly important in this connection is that the poet's heroic quality has come about precisely by virtue of the fact that he has made the sort of poem that he has made—one in which he at once creates and controls his world (including his readers) and is created and controlled by it (including his readers). All that is demanded of the readers is that they yield to the poem, as has the world. This done, the "procreant urge," as Whitman calls the drive towards creativity, will be spontaneously released and the readers will be on their way to their own personal, individuated transformations, to their own achievement of heroic status. Thus, we may say, Whitman worked toward what Pound has called a new Paideuma—"a tangle or complex of unrooted ideas": one entirely of process, of guiding, strengthening, energizing, and redefining the sensible self by putting it into direct contact with the world, only in which it would be free, creative, and whole—a self proper to the American democrat. Such a poetry would, to say it again, not memorialize a hero but rather create one.

Song of Myself does make for a new kind of heroic poetry. In it, the hero comes into being, as, releasing the full creative force of the self, he energizes the *realia* of his world and takes from them his name, his office, and his phenomenal qualities. Unlike Barlow's Columbus, he is not given a vision; he makes one—and making it, he becomes it. Part of his heroic act entails his freeing himself from what he has learned is the false hierarchical heroism of traditional societies. The dialectic of *Song of Myself* articulates this act. And as the act is dynamically invertebrate, so is the dialectic. This new heroic poem, this new epic, is one of ordering, not of order; of creation, not confirmation; of energizing, not memorializing. When in 1872 Whitman wrote *Democratic Vistas* and let the trajectory of *Song of Myself* and what followed it carry him forward toward his utopia, he concluded:

> It must still be reiterated . . . that all else in the contributions of nation or age, through its policies, materials, heroic personalities,

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> military eclat &c., remains crude, and defers, in any close and thorough-going estimate, until vitalized by a national, original archetype in literature. They only put the nation in form, finally tell anything—prove, complete anything—perpetrate anything.

Song of Myself, then, as it is the sort of poem which Barlow's Columbus might have envisioned, is such a national, original archetype.

III

The third of my exemplars of the American epic is the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. Pound, of course, is the ideal type of an anti-Whitmanian poet. Yet this very opposition is quite meaningful, as oppositions in a dialectical series tend inevitably to be. For the question of Whitman has always troubled Pound. Recently we have been told a good deal about Pound's varying appraisals of Whitman: how he seems finally to have come to understand Whitman as a nineteenth-century culture hero who, in Pound's words, went "bail for the nation." But the understanding goes even deeper than that; for in *Canto 82* (one of the Pisan series) Pound finally goes so far as to identify himself with Whitman—both poets, in his view, seeking to understand the deep mystery of birth, death, regeneration as it totally informs man's lonely fate on this earth. It is, however, an identification which we should be careful to limit and define. Pound feels that he too is making the sort of cosmically penetrating poem toward which Whitman aspired; moreover he too feels that he is a culture hero for modern man and that his poem, when read properly, will exhibit to his readers a sense of the possibility for heroic action in our time and thus will redefine, reintegrate and recreate them as total human beings. But his poetics are almost diametrically opposed to Whitman's.

The crux of the opposition lies in two conceptions of style; which is to say, two conceptions of how poetry acts, hence two poetics. This can be illustrated briefly. Whitman wrote in the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass:*

> The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hand in the way between me and the rest like curtains... [my elision]. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

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And Pound wrote in his *Guide to Kulchur* (1938):

> STYLE, the attainment of a style consists of so knowing words that one will communicate the various parts of what one says with the various degrees and weights of importance which one wishes.

It is, in essence, for Pound, a matter of self-expression and decorum at all costs. Pound's belief in decorum ("knowing words") of this sort, indeed, is at bottom the belief which makes possible his conception of the American epic: one in which degrees and weights are so finely managed that communication is exact and exacting knowledge. The end—its fusion of the artistic and the moral object—of the Poundian epic is such knowledge and insight—the new Paideuma which will make the new man. One thing—and I cannot help but think that, in spite of Pound's marvellous internationalism, it is an American thing—Pound has in common with Whitman: He would create, not confirm, the hero of his epic.

And how is he to do so? Which is to ask: What are the *Cantos?* What would they do? How would they do it? Toward the middle of *Canto 85,* these words suddenly leap off the page:

> *No classics,*
> *No American history,*
> *no centre, no general root,*
> *No* prezzo giusto *as core.*

The *Cantos* are an attempt to remedy this radical defect. They supply, however, not a single center but a series—a constellation of exemplars of *prezzo giusto* and its opposites by means of which the center, and the reader who will seek it, may be defined. The *Cantos* consist of a complex of centers, the perception of which is to be ordered by the absolutely decorous management of "degrees and weights of importance." They may be perceived thus because they are intended to exist as ideograms, as Pound now puts it; units of meaning so clearly articulated that they virtually dispense with abstract, discursive effects. Whereas in Whitman, it was the rhythm of the sensibility which was procreantly to urge the reader toward the wonders of the visible world, in Pound it is the commanding power of the ideograms (or images, or vortexes) which is to define the reader's world and so define the reader himself.

There are, to take a quite brief example, these lines from that

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section of *Canto 82* to which I have already alluded: Pound has had occasion to speak of the "ignorance of locality," modern man's inability to know himself in relation to the culture in which he lives. He speaks of ancient Greece, where things were better. Then:

Till forty years since, Reithmuller indignant:
"Fvy! in Tdaenmarck efen dh' beasantz gnow him,"
meaning Whitman, exotic, still suspect
four miles from Camden
"O troubled reflection
"O Throat, O throbbing heart"
How drawn, O GEA TERRA,
what draws as thou drawest
till one sink into thee by an arm's width
embracing thee. Drawest,
truly thou drawest.
Wisdom lies next thee,
simple, past metaphor.
Where I lie let the thyme rise
and basilicum
let the herbs rise in April abundant
By Ferrara was buried naked, fu Nicolo
e di qua di la del Po,
wind: ἐμὸν τὸν ἄνδρα
lie into earth to the breast bone, to the left shoulder
Kipling suspected it
to the height of ten inches or over
man, earth: two halves of the tally. . . .

The work of the Pound exegetes lets us begin to see what this passage comes to. Riethmuller (Pound misspells the name) was a teacher of Pound's at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of a study of "Whitman and the Germans." Recalling his teacher's oral statement, Pound then recalls and echoes "Out of the Cradle". He moves to an address to Gea Terra, and so to a definition of his own situation through that of Whitman and the protagonists of his poem. This is the wisdom "past metaphor." And our sense of that wisdom is further sharpened by the image

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of the herbs rising out of the grave, of the account of the burial place of Nicolo (one of Pound's culture-bearing Renaissance heroes); of the Greek "my man"—a fragmentary quotation from the second idyll of Theocritus in which a woman asks the goddess of the moon to keep her lover faithful; of the (as yet not totally understood) reference to Kipling on burial; and of the use of the Whitmanian "tally" to indicate the ritualistic significance of "man, earth." The passage goes on in this vein, drawing from widely scattered sources, to force us into a realization of the ultimate loneliness—separated like a lover from his lost or dead beloved—of the role of the hero as artist in our culture. It is not so much that Pound speaks, but that he would make his images, quotations, and citations speak—speak so sharply, infra-linguistically, as to define the sensibility of him who makes and/or reads the *Cantos*.

What emerges (or is intended to emerge) from the *Cantos* is a sense of absolute propaedeutic control; the assemblage of centers that is the poem is for Pound the only proper Paideuma. It is intended to constitute a rediscovery, a making new, of the noblest, truest, and surest elements in culture; a rediscovery so powerful in its stylistic precision that it will irresistibly reconstitute the sensibility (and thus the political and economic morality) of him who would give himself over to reading it—someone, in the end, akin to the "cosmic man" whom Pound's friend Wyndham Lewis envisaged for America at the end of the forties. Pound once said of the *Cantos:* "They are openly volitionist, establishing, I think clearly, the effect of the factive personality. . . ." In Pound's hands, the American epic becomes thus openly volitionist and entirely factive—willing and making, through its collocation of ideogrammic centers, a new Paideuma for a new world.

We cannot yet say precisely what the structural principle of the *Cantos* is. Pound has not made up his mind. We can observe, quite briefly (with D. S. Carne-Ross, whose observances I echo here), that there are a series of thematic continuities in the poem: sea-voyages of Odysseus to hell, of Niccolo of Este to the Holy Land, of the Carthaginian Hanno along the west coast of Africa. We can observe, moreover, a reiterated concern with the problem of the artist in society. And we can trace out episodes in early national American history, in that of Renaissance Italy, and of Confucian China. And there are Pound's factive, volitionist he-

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roes, Odysseus, Confucius, Sigismundo, Jefferson, John Adams, and the poet himself—each of whom is marked by a quality of awareness which is transubstatiated by his acts into the monuments of world culture. In all there is the concern to see how the great acts of world history have been acts of creation, not destruction; how such acts have resulted from a resistance to the abstractive, usurous demands which Pound believes the world has put on his heroes. Yet it is not possible to put down even briefly the poem's dialectic; for it has none. That is, it has no linear, composed, structured form; no rhythmic periodicities; rather it consists of decorously managed, ideogrammically set down instants of insight which are to force themselves beyond abstractness into the reader's consciousness and so to make him new. The *Cantos*, Pound has said, "are the tale of the tribe." The point is that Pound has to re-create the tribe in order to tell its tale. The *Cantos* are that act of creation. If it is but done powerfully enough, there will be no longer a need to tell the tale. For it would be ours—ours in such a way that we would not have to have it told to us. As in Barlow's vision, and as in Whitman's practice, the end of poetry is that reconstitution of man which will entail the withering away of poetry.

IV

Pound once declared that the *Cantos* had a large defect, "the defect inherent in the record of struggle." He did not say, or have to say, that the virtues of the *Cantos* are specifically related to its defects. For they are indeed the virtues of struggle: the struggle to make the poem such a powerful social weapon that it will come to dispense with itself by being itself. And it is thus also with *Song of Myself*. The struggle is one for self-identification and self-preservation, and it is truly the epic subject of modern times, in America and out. The fact that the poet should be obliged to conceive the poetic act as the sole means of self-identification and self-preservation: this is perhaps one of the tragic subjects of modern times. The highest significance that *Song of Myself* and the *Cantos* can have for us is as the most profound of records of that impossible struggle. No poem, I should judge, can do all they are intended to.

And yet I should likewise judge that in the modern world, such

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poems have to exist just so that they may fail. A sign of their success indeed is their failure. And what is left? A need to question what we have, how far we have come, and how far we may go, I can only think that it is ultimately as an instigator of such questions that the American epic, as given to us by Whitman and Pound (and many others, I should say), has its highest imaginative value for us. Asking such questions, we concern ourselves with the life of our culture; perhaps we will be moved to strive to make it more vital. Doing so, perhaps we will even have one day that kind of community in which we can conceive of an authentic hero, whom the poets among us will finally be able to memorialize and reaffirm in a true epic. We can only hope that he will not be as obtuse as Barlow's Columbus, as manic as Whitman's Whitman, or as distorted from his historical actuality as Pound's Malatesta. Which is to say: We can only hope that he will be a projection of something other than the agonizing desire of his creator to make over the world, and the men in it, in his own heroic image. We would wish him to be a person first and a hero afterwards—a hero in consequence of his being a person.

Indeed, if we ever get to the point of knowing how to define ourselves as persons, maybe we will be able to define our community. And maybe it will turn out to be a community with not one image of the hero but many—a community whose heroes' heroism consists in the fact that they can teach us how to resist a community's inevitable urge to coalesce all its heroes into one. What we long for, in many heroes or one, is a strong, assured image of our full possibilities as persons in our community. And it might well be that for us a definition of the person is *per se* a definition of the hero—instead of the other way around; as it seems to have been in the epic and the epic communities of tradition. And it might well be that Barlow's, Whitman's, and Pound's ultimate failure to create a hero adequate to our needs lies in the fact that such a definition was for them intolerable in its restrictiveness. They lusted (Pound still lusts) after a sheer creative power which would not only let them define the modern heroic self but reformulate it, not only make it new but make it. Thus, we can quite safely say, they went too far. But surely they did what they had to do; and surely we can learn from it. They saw (does Pound still see?) quite clearly what Freud was to see in 1930, in *Civilization and*

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Its Discontents. Speaking of that "misère psychologique" which is so marked in modern life, he wrote:

> This danger is most menacing where the social forces of cohesion consist predominantly of identifications of the individuals in the group with one another, whilst leading personalities fail to acquire the significance that should fall to them in the process of group-formation. The state of civilization in America at the present day offers a good opportunity for studying this injurious effect of civilization which we have reason to dread.

The Columbiad, Song of Myself, and the *Cantos*—each can be made out to be therapeutic in so far as each is to initiate in us something of a clear understanding of the powers and limitations of our own processes of group-formation. The best, as always, must be yet to come.

But this is utopianism. It is a curious fact, and a painful one, that those of us who might want such a society and who cannot struggle for it imaginatively, as do Whitman and Pound, so often, like Barlow, conclude with such bleak, abstractive, fleshless utopianisms. We cannot really believe in heroes, yet we want them, and so want them created for us. Looking for a hero in an epic, we discover, of course, that the author must first of all be his own hero, as his epic is the struggle of his own creative forces to bring into being something which constitutes his central subject. Thus, we see, in some way or other he must tell all; thus he wills himself to be incapable of dissembling, lest something of the creative self be left out. There is ever the ungainliness of his compulsions, which we cannot escape: some of them, like Whitman's homosexuality and his political sentimentality, no longer much disturb or concern us; others, like Pound's paranoia and his antisemitism, are of a dangerousness which we can only hate and fear, even to the point of cutting off part of the *Cantos* from ourselves. We know all this, know it well. Still, as we used to gather around Whitman and form Fellowships, so we now wait upon Pound at St. Elizabeth's and contribute to *Pound Newsletters*. We seem bound to strive to live in our hero's image in cults with no rituals except those of *explication de texte*. We even publish statements like this:

> "Leaves of Grass" has a tone peculiarly its own and strange in all

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> the annals of literary creation. Whitman speaks in it as would heaven, making unalterable pronouncements, oracular of the mysteries and powers that pervade and guide all life, all death, all purpose.
>
> (Horace Traubel, in *In Re Walt Whitman,* 1883)

And this:

> It would seem that [Pound] has his fingers on the pulse of creation, and like the poet-philosopher Goethe, bequeaths more than he states: a myriad of facets of existence to be explored in coming years, an attempt to understand what this fire is that he . . . kindles in one.
>
> (Louise Myers, in *Pound Newsletter,* 1955)

At second glance, we blush, or should. But then this is our situation; and we all (perhaps secretly, or unknowingly) hope for someone, somewhere, who will make the struggle for us—or at least show us its conditions. Occasionally we find him, as many found Whitman and have found Pound. Whitman and Pound, each knows who the real hero is: himself. This is the root of their virtues and their defects, of the strength of their epics and of their weakness. Their poems are thus doubly propaedeutic—in their strength and in their weakness, in their virtues and in their defects. If we fail to take the two together, we miss their great meaning for us. It is perhaps useful to recall that the *editio princeps* of *Song of Myself* (in the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*) and of the *Cantos* (and, curiously enough, of *The Columbiad* too) has as frontispiece a portrait of it real hero, its author: he who is perforce our hero because he is, in so far as we can bring ourselves to know and admit it, a projection of ourselves into an ultimate American personality. Looking at our ultimate, marginal selves thus, we are bound either to hate or to adore.

And what, in the long run, is the relation between the American epic and the epic of tradition? It is as though Odysseus, or Aeneas, or Beowulf, or Mio Cid, or even Dante, under the *persona* of Adam (in whose fall/ we sinnèd all) had been compelled, out of some deep, dark necessity, to write his own history, and in writing it, to make it. I am reminded of some words of Robert Penn Warren in the prefatory note to *Brother to Dragons:* ". . . if poetry is the little myth we make, history is the big myth we live, and in our living, constantly remake." The struggle to make the big myth into the little one—this is as good a definition as any of the American epic.

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PARIS LEARY

Addison's Walk

The hour bears at tug of scarf and girl
all the rugger blues away to tea,
and where they merge with sudden stone I see
a porter foil a tourist. The deer curl

into a breathing camouflage of fright,
fond of touch, but panicked by a sigh;
and the river deepens where the salmon sky
lowers with smoke below the pressing night.

The final pram has simpered out of view,
slung like a schooner with net-bags and stores.
I walk slower now, alone, and there pours
up from the split-potato earth the new

sweet acid smell of early summer, May
just not April. There is not even bird-sound
here where the young Addison took his round
in the reasonable service of his short-gown day,

a gentleman commoner bent on thought.
The land-locked island, green and English wet,
reefed in the swell of still-life cattle yet,
discharges vapours which the morning caught,

and only wants a swan who is a prince
led by a goose-girl secretly a queen,
to form a phantasy of faith between
the real day and this. Oh, ever since

Joseph Addison paced his afternoon,
and before it bore his name, this was unreal
enough; but now the quiet evenings steal
from the chilling fancy what a warmer June

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will not restore: the leisure of a moral,
the amorous sentiment conceived in science,
and the antique suicide of self-reliance;—
now introspection ends in joke or quarrel,

and the plot he circled round is locked in mind
with the sketched cows and water-color bees,
a modest Eighteenth Century period-piece.
But who can stroll there now? May is unkind

with pastoral machinery and days
belying their conclusions. I hurry on
the last few hundred yards of this invention,
emerging like a tripper from a maze:

relieved, regretful, and reluctant still
to leave the soporific country mind
for the city-truth that every alley's blind.
Reflection now is wrenched by the will

from the formal paths where Addison construed
his world (not simple then, but possible)—
connected, neat, and undiscoverable
as old hunters' trails in a burnt-out wood.

The Man in Room 271

Every chair
and his mother's gate-leg table
he knew as optical illusion.
He was aware
that everything was an atomic fable,
and resented the collusion
of his retina and his brain
in making plain
what was in reality confusion.

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A rose's scent
he inhaled as fragrant molecules,
and wondered that his feet
could only dent
what was, according to the rules,
only a fleet
flow of energy in motion.
And he had a notion
that the snail's proverbial slowness was a cheat.

The very bed
he slept on (alone)
was a cyclotron of activity.
If he were dead,
he was sure the humming bone
would not lie quietly;
and all the world was a giant hive
of atoms, alive
and buzzing for all eternity.

In a daze
from this Heraclitean opiate,
for fear of catching flux, he took
care not to gaze
too closely at what he ate,
for fear the cook
might have rubbed off onto the roast.
It was his boast
he never gave Experience a second look.

Protected
by a patent tasteless potion
in his mind, he cried, 'Daemonic!'
and rejected
the whole repellent concept of motion.
He denied the electronic.
He has achieved with this attitude to illness
a remarkable stillness—
to which his doctors now refer as 'catatonic'.

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Gormless in Gaza

She robbed him first of all of anger
by that hurt and understanding look,
then filched his protest by a careful patience,
her private blend of stiffness and submission,
which he accepted, never took
She bound him with a web of langour
spun of endless approbations
and infinite, compliant indecision.

She built a temple, small, serene,
and made her acolytes respect him.
She never asked, but sapped, his secret strength,
and, finding that her perfect frozen breasts
still had such power to affect him,
she made him feel his need obscene,
and his surviving rage at length
became the subject of her little jests.

His bondage was to be the host
exhibited to visitors
in dinner jacket at the table's head.
Drugged with manners by her deadly balm,
he never called her sisters whores,
and which he feared and hated most,
her friends or kinfolk, never said,
so shackled to the pillars of her calm.

And nothing grew in mind or feeling
to make him secretly recover
the splendid, wry, and animal delight
the vision of her loveliness once gave him.
She did not think he could pull over
on both their heads her painted ceiling,
until he called her name that night
he had the stroke from which she could not save him.

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Cecily

'Julian, you're in love with Cecily . . .
Look, Anthony, Julian's blushing, he is
in love with Cecily . . .'

The beige skins
dilate on the late, instant coffee,
transmitting like a crystal-set the sound
of incredible voices delicate and fresh
over ashtray dusting ash on sleeve and bisquet . . .

'Cecily is basically, of course, a tart . . .'
'She owes me six bob from Saturday . . .'
'But don't you think she's just a trifle—louche?'

April is not really cruel, breeding
no more disillusionment than winter,
for only the inevitable can be cruel,
and only a fool puts his faith in the weather.
But yet how strangely cruel now to watch
these pink-wristed awkward poses, to hear
the serge and twill epigrams, the tweed
laughter, this gaiety—true, not forced—
brightens the spring air like early flowers!
Spring's miracle is not its crocuses,
but the out-of-season wonder of these voices
swelling the cafe crush with names, adventures,
delicious slanders, cigarette-opinions,
darling and doomed in this April caper,
ignorant of roentgens and the news.
Here the news of the world is

'Cecily
told Adrian she was a virgin . . .'

and one sits in a summer desperation,
ill with the last decade of one's youth,
the ten Aprils, the deaths, the little wars,
pretending, against the future, to be in love
with an unknown, half-imagined girl

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whose name drifts across the sunlit room
like the fall-out from a rose—Cecily,
girl most likely not to be a woman.

Elegy in a City Churchyard

Bright in the bone-orchard, the woolly women
busy their dead with walking-shoes and tweed,
cozy with trowels and thermos-flasks of tea.
Neat on their knees, they pick and purr and make
reacquaintance with the winter dead,
warm in the early sun when folk indeed
long to go on pilgrimage, and weed.

Spring with its full kit, sweet, but hardly subtle,
stirs among annuities and pensions,
and rousts these old girls out from toasty flats,
up from the biscuits, scones, and cherry-cake,
and brings them here to clip in middle May
where memories resume their old dimensions
like sonnets expert in outworn conventions.

Happy now, content as apple-butter,
gossipping of gall-stones in the sun,
did they once touch the bodies which they tend
with passion or delight, or arch to give
desire its answer by alarming it?
Their gloves remove the paper from the bun
and offer crumbs to robins one by one.

What of all these men do they remember?
Is it not, simply, that they like to garden
by fading May-trees in a sunny season?
The spring itself commends at least this word
for the tired men who left their bonds and blood
to women they could never break or harden:
their small adulteries have pity's pardon.

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New Faces of 19—

With a cast of millions and a surprising twist,
first tried for effect in a yokel province,
it took all the capitals by storm
without having to doctor plot or form,
and the stage hasn't been the same, since.
For when all the hullabaloo and dust

died down and the novelty wore off
and we waited for the critical reviews,
there was nothing—nothing but the play,
and we were all in it. That was the day
the hero and the villain seemed to fuse
and we all became extras wondering if

our money, which you couldn't tell from real,
would still buy the plaster bread and tea
you couldn't tell from whiskey. We chafed and waited
for cue, chord, or hook, but what we hated
most was the silence where there should be
applause—or even jeers; that is, until,

not from 'the gods' but from the stalls and circle
the sound rose up, from every seat
our growing play had spread to: it was our
voices crying 'Curtain!' and a power
grew in our throats different from the sweet
deceptive music of the first act's sirens.

But how could human throats make or describe
what it swelled into as the Epilogue
began, how the sense of all things altered
as we altered and our voices faltered
over lines we knew but which could only clog
our changing mouths like ash? We should have died

scenes, scenes, an interval ago—
but we live, or say, something's living in us,

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a transformation which is life of a sort.
Nature we mock and after nature, art,
and after art what is there but *finis?*
Good Night, Ladies, Good Night, The Show Must Go . . .

Johnny Merrimac

After the brandy neat as a poem he reached
up to put his arms around his mother
and draw her down to him to kiss his forehead
as he had always done since she was young,
slyly to untie her apron-strings,
she laughing, and they would say his prayers
in the hedge-bed darkness as she tamped him down
in cool sheets and warm comforters,
and when it was all fright she would lie
beside him laughing till he went to sleep.
In a haze of King Oliver and brandy
he reached up to draw her down beside him,
but her kiss was open-mouthed and warm-tongued
and though he could not see, he was awake
suddenly and untied her apron-strings
and in the flower-bed dark he grew to her
and he drew her down beside him and within her
waited to be prayed with into sleep.
And he said, 'Now I lay me' and she laughed
and all night long she laughed. And alone
with her asleep in the pistol-grey morning
waking on his elbow he saw her hair
was never filbert-brown and her hands were wrong
and he was thirty-four and it was morning.
And back somewhere in a sort of Kansas
where he had tucked her in the daylight earth
in the isen glare of his eleventh birthday
she whispered so softly he could scarcely hear,
'Don't be afraid of the dark, my Johnny Merry,
I'll stay beside you till you go to sleep.'

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

Getting Away from the Chickens

LAST SUMMER I PICKED UP *The Princess Casamassima.* Reading and talking about what I read is my living now; I have to know about James and I'm supposed to like him. Thirty-five or forty years ago I would have had to know about, and try to like, George Meredith, not Henry James. But nowadays Percy Lubbock says James is the man, and so do F. R. Leavis, Lionel Trilling, articles in all the literary journals, Auden in a poem, and the Old Possum himself; Graham Greene, a formidable witness, not only refers to James as the Master but calls him the Shakespeare of fiction. Well. After all this pressure ex auctoritatibus, I'd considered myself lucky that I liked even one James story, "The Turn of the Screw"; those ghosts my be dense with meanings, whether Wilson's neurotic projections or Heilman's symbols from theology; I find it charming to see how the critics have adorned it with theories like an Easter egg; but meanings or no meanings it's the best ghost story I ever read, and a ghost story is what *James* said it was. Once I make my way into any novel of his I usually get all wound up in it; and furthermore, he's relevant, significant, seminal, morally serious, and a lot of other adjectives of literary praise; I respect him, which clears my conscience. I'd put off *The Princess* for a long time, though I'd been guilty of the perversion of reading two critical articles about it, because it concerns an anarchist named Hyacinth; now any hyacinthine anarchist I've ever known or can imagine would have changed his name to Bill at the age of five; I did not believe James knew whom he was writing about.

The volume fell open to chapter thirteen. The Princess asks Hyacinth about his family.

> "I have no family."
> "None at all?"
> "None at all."
> "But the French blood you speak of and which I see perfectly in your face—you haven't the English expression or want of expression—that must have come to you through someone."

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"Yes, through my mother."
"And she's dead?"
"Long ago."

Anarchism? literary classic? the Master? If you wish; but a proud orphan whose blood showed in his face—such a one was Tarzan. Hopefully I turned back to the first chapter of *The Princess* and settled down to cut the cackle.

But, oh, density of significance and subtlety began to weigh on me. The book had good ingredients—high life and low life, intrigue, love, the illegitimate son of a French whore and a British nobleman, sacrifice, danger—and James knows how to spin a good tale; but he'd gone and freighted the rifts with ore, just as the critics said he had. Still, I'm glad to report there's a lot more Tarzan to Hyacinth Robinson than they led me to believe. ("The Influence of Henry James on Edgar Rice Burroughs"? or, better, "The Princess Casamassima as Tarzan of the Apes"?) In fact there was so much Tarzan that after a couple of hundred pages of *The Princess* I went to the Columbia University library and got out *Tarzan of the Apes* (the only Burroughs book it lists).

The first sentence encouraged me:

> I had this story from one who had no business to tell it to me, or to any other. I may credit the seductive influence of an old vintage upon the narrator for the beginning of it, and my own skeptical incredulity during the days that followed for the balance of the strange tale.

Not James, maybe, but a sort of bare-bones Conrad, and Conrad was (of course) a great disciple of James. In five minutes I was right back into it.

The summer I was sixteen, in the slough of the Depression, I left home for the first time, for my first job, tending chickens. I fed, watered, and cleaned up after 2500 White Leghorn hens, 500 pullets, and enough roosters to keep things perking; on Sunday I worked only three or four hours, but on weekdays nine or ten; for this I was paid $25 a month and food. Since I was saving to go to college that fall, I spent no money, except on one movie, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (Shakespeare's reputation and the title got me there, but Bottom the Weaver made me ache with

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laughter and the fairies had stars in their hair.) I had only one friend in town whom it wouldn't cost me money to see. He came over once in a while and we would lounge around the back porch debating capital punishment, pacifism, the differences between socialism and capitalism, the Middle Ages, and the existence of God; his mother and brother were Holy Rollers, and his brother sometimes spoke in tongues. I admired my friend's fervor for distant causes, and when I was with him I was a pacifist, a socialist, and a rational atheist. But most of my free time I spent getting away from the chickens.

Tarzan, Mars, Pellucidar, Fu Manchu, Poictesme, the Faerie Queene, Gay Paree: they did the job well. Now that I'm a professor of English, I wish that I could say that I liked *The Faerie Queene* best, but in truth what kept me going past the first book or so was the knowledge that, if I read it all, William Lyon Phelps would admit me to his Faerie Queene Club, in his column "As I Like It" in *Scribner's:* I did, he did. It wasn't that I didn't like the dragons and bowers, Britomart the lady-knight, the twins who committed incest in their mother's womb, the jousts; but the poem was too long, the stanzas were lovely but too lulling (they still are), and there were too many serious meanings swarming about, so many that I had to put out a bit of energy to keep from trying to guess what they were. Still, by August I could dream in Spenserian, and I wrote James Branch Cabell a fan letter in five gorgeous Faerie Queene stanzas. My stern friend tried to bring me down to brass tacks with *The Outline of History, Merchants of Death* and Spinoza's *Ethics,* and he gave me a sermon once on a candy egg his brother was fond of. It was one of those frosty-sugar eggs with a hole in the end, through which one peeped at a Swiss chalet set among delicately pink mountains; this, said my friend, had absolutely nothing to do with reality and it was very likely immoral to enjoy anything so *pretty*. Once, to my shame, I substituted *Gay Paree* for Stuart Chase, an act of rampant magic-carpetism which I did not confess to my friend, for I dared not challenge his scorn; the biggest defense I put up for myself was that Cabell was highly respected and Spenser was a great literary classic; he was impressed, and told me I ought to read John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty,* which was a classic too. I said sure.

The hens were kept in rows of wooden sheds with small yards

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to dust in, maybe a hundred to a shed; the pullets had a large shed and a huge yard to themselves, with trees. Prepare the mash and slop it in the troughs; scatter the grain; clean the water jars and keep them filled; clean the nests; scrape the stinking roosts. Gather the eggs, clean them, candle them, pack them. Collect the dead chickens, put them in a large garbage can, and pour gasoline on them to keep them from stinking too much till there should be enough of them to bother burying. Rescue any that showed blood, for the others would not stop picking till they'd killed it; watch for sticktights sucking the hens' vitality, and dust against them; return the escapees, and clip the wings of the high fliers; beware the one-eyed rooster, whose peck hurt. We buried once or twice a week, at dawn for the neighbors' sake, but it spoiled my breakfast. When my boss was not home, I had to sell friers to people who came to the place to buy them. I had shot rabbits and killed snakes with stones, but I had never been *holding* a creature at the time I was killing it. I would catch the bird's legs in my left hand, flop it onto the chopping block, smooth its neck out with the flat of the hatchet till it stayed put, then chop; the neck is gristly, and tough to a dull hatchet; if I chopped too high up, the neck squawked; I stuffed the convulsing body into a slot to keep it from splattering blood on me, but before I could get in there, the legs strove in the palm of my hand. One day in July the temperature rose to 123°; the hens in their panic huddled together; I went from house to house scattering them and sprinkling them with a hose; the rancher's wife—he happened to be out of town that day—came out to help me but the heat prostrated her; she worried about me, and when I slumped into the kitchen to rest she made me take a tablespoon of salt, the sting of which clung to my tongue; I thought the pullets, being thin, would not need my care, but as it turned out they piled up under their roost so that 200 of them suffocated; the hens' fat melted, so I was told, and ran inside their skins; in any case, 300 of them died. In August disease started; I collected the forty or fifty afflicted chickens into cages and trundled them down by the death cans; I would reach one out to the boss; if it was too far gone, he would slit its throat and toss it in a can; if it was in the early stages, he would press a feather dipped in kerosene up through its mouth and out its ear, and hand it back to me to return it to its cage; if it had large

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sores, he cut the sores open with a knife, swabbed them with iodine, did the kerosened feather job, and gave me the bird to take to the sick house. After fifteen minutes of this I fainted.

Tarzan—there was a man! His dreadful wounds left no scars; he ate his meat raw; he threw his woman over his shoulder; he killed a lioness with a full-Nelson. Yet he was at the top of the scale of evolution, white and British (it was an Englishman after all who invented evolution). He was so savage he was an ape, though even then he was saved from cannibalism by hereditary instinct, and he was so noble he was Lord Greystoke, though even in Jane Porter's own house he was restrained from killing an obnoxious suitor of hers only by her pleas for clemency. O noble savage! He taught himself to read and write English. He could run through the trees, at night, with a man on his shoulders, as easily as an ordinary man might walk down a London street at high noon. Kipling? In plenty, and lots of De Foe and Cooper too. Stevenson? Mutineers, buried treasure, treachery, murder. Homer? Bloodshed in every chapter, epic epithets, and a hero guided and protected by the great gods Instinct, Reason and Progress. The villains look like rats; the professor's name is Archimedes Q. Porter; Kala's mother-instinct (she was an ape) is as sterling as any woman's. The Africans are childish blacks, natives, whom the whites must treat with understanding and severity, for their own good. Danger? The prelude and condition of victory! Contradictions? Who cares? . . . At every moment Edgar Rice Burroughs, that middle-aged, middle-classed, middle-western unsuccessful business man, believed in the fantasies and prejudices he compounded his stories of. A hero above the law, brought within the law by a woman's love, the tale told with plenty of suspense—you can't beat it, especially when you are adolescent, which is to say an as yet unsuccessful man.

It didn't mean a thing and you couldn't make it mean a thing if you tried. As for *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* it means a lot I'm sure, but I went to it hoping to get fun from it and fun I got, unpolluted fun. After all, they had plenty of chickens in the old days too, as Shakespeare knew well enough—Armadas of them. And James, to get away from the Plymouth Rock variety, spent most of his life in Europe.

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In Tarzan's veins "flowed the blood of the best of a race of mighty fighters"—i.e., British aristocrats. But of course! He was an epic hero (wasn't he?) fighting and killing a gorilla, armed only with a knife, when a mere ten years of age. Now Hyacinth Robinson, though "it is a remarkable fact that at the age of ten he was ironic," was not powerful enough to be a warrior of any kind, even if he'd tried, and was far too subtle to be a hero. "But all the same he was happy to feel he had blood in his veins that would account for the finest sensibilities," the blood of "his long-descended, supercivilized sire." (*My* veins and arteries flow with corpuscles and antibodies and various other of the modern products which have supplanted the blood of belted earls; it is type O and free from such noxious qualities as leukemia, so that I helped put myself through junior college by selling it for $25 a pint in hospitals.)

As for being civilisé, Hyacinth, when the Princess vaguely extends an invitation to him, might make "a silent inclination of his utmost stature." (I tried that one, in the privacy of my own living room, with dismal results.) But Tarzan has qualities even James would not disdain. He "manipulated the knife and fork as exquisitely as did the polished D'Arnot," *only a month* after he first used table instruments! And he drove an automobile with complete aplomb *less than three weeks* after he left Africa! (You can't home experiment with Tarzan's feats and stunts.)

Which do you think this is, Tarzan and Jane or Hyacinth and the Princess?

> The pure, high dignity with which she had just spoken and which appeared to cover a suppressed tremor of passion set his pulses throbbing, and her tone, her voice, her wonderful face showed she had a generous soul.

In the above passage I have cut a few phrases whose reference would have betrayed the book, but this that follows is the old boy (which old boy?) word for word, with a single adjective omitted.

> It was a stately and gallant little compliment performed with the grace and dignity of utter unconsciousness of self. It was the hallmark of his aristocratic birth, the natural outcropping of many generations of fine breeding, an hereditary instinct of graciousness which a lifetime of uncouth training and environment could not eradicate.

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Inimitable, no?

I haven't done anything to chickens for the past twenty-five years but eat them; all the same, they crowd me now and again; I've been keeping an eye peeled for up-to-date magic carpets. *Hercules, My Shipmate* is fun and probably doesn't mean anything, though I wouldn't swear to it; Graves is tricky. About the best I've found is *The Golden Strangers* by Henry Treece: invasion, magic, prodigies, killing, malice, passion, war, primitives—it's terrific. But Treece is so reasonable and unprejudiced that every once in a while I get the feeling he is headed toward making a Comment on Life. His people are primitives, not savages, and his heroes are superior not because of the blood in their veins but because of the anthropological psyches in their heads; in the end they are gorily defeated. His stories keep the chickens at bay, all right, but only just.

For a few years there, beginning when my friend was sentenced to a camp for conscientious objectors, I set my gaze sternly toward realism. In practice this involved driving a taxicab and reading *Studs Lonigan,* neither of which I enjoyed. Gradually it occurred to me that pimps and drunks and hot jazz addicts were no more real than anybody else and that books about The People, who grimly did not think, were like bad dreams. Scratch a realist and find a reformer: no wonder; the world he sees is only half there. The last I heard of my conscientious friend he had just returned from a peace mission to Russia and was doing public relations work for an organization whose aim is immediate, universal disarmament—beside which a sugar chalet in a hollow egg seems to me eminently practical, at least you can eat it.

A great thing about Burroughs was that his fantasy seemed pure. He thought his prejudices were truths; all the Golden Bough, White Goddess sort of thing which has been enlightening us nowadays, he neither knew nor wanted to know nor would he have believed had he known. That White Man's Burden, for example, with which he larded his Tarzan books—when reading them I believe (and believed) in it about as much as I believed that, in order to save Jane, Monsieur Tarzan flew through the tree-tops of a Wisconsin forest on fire; it's one of the ingredients with which

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Burroughs makes a good story. His prejudices are so gross that no one bothers to analyze them out or to attack them. They are also out-of-date: the three branches of the New York Public Library I went to listed no Burroughs at all; I had to go to four second-hand bookstores down on Fourth Avenue to find a few Tarzan books, and the sellers said most were long out of print; in eight stores I could find not one of his Mars series; maybe, I was told, Sears Roebuck still lists some of them for the Midwestern trade. . . . But they were clear-eyed, well-thewed prejudices arrayed only in a loin cloth; you can take them or leave them, unless *your* big prejudice happens to be anti-prejudice. What matters is the story, which tastes good.

And the great thing about *The Princess* seemed to be this: it's Burroughs for sophisticates. Not that James didn't add sprigs of reality to his blooming prejudices, but it is the charm of the arrangement that *really* matters most.

Or is it, *really*? Did I, a white American of British ancestry, like Tarzan just for the story? And as for James, consider some of the ingredients of his concoction.

He likes religiose metaphors, and religiosity flourishes nowadays: for example, he often speaks of sacrifices where none exist; Hyacinth's father is said to be the "sacrificed Lord Frederick" when in fact he was murdered by a cast-off mistress, Hyacinth's mother. You may object that James is being ironic here, intending the idea of sacrifice to be Hyacinth's, not the author's; I suppose this is the eighth type of ambiguity, and I'm sure it's one of James's specialties, but in cruder circles fancy irony like this is known as eating your cake and having it too. Like every tale-teller, he likes his characters to be extraordinary: Hyacinth is highly attractive to lovely ladies and to upstanding men of all sorts; the Princess is (repeatedly) "the most remarkable woman in Europe"; Hoffendahl, the conspirator to whom Hyacinth "gave his life away", was "the right man", "the real thing", "the Master indeed". As for glamour, the Princess is scarcely discernible beneath its shimmer—

> Purity of line and form, of cheek and chin and lip and brow, a colour that seemed to live and glow, a radiance of grace and eminence and success—these things were seated in triumph in the face of the Prin-

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> cess, and her visitor, as he held himself in his chair trembling with the revelation, questioned if she were really of the same substance with the humanity he had hitherto known.

Even the Prince, a sad sack of a fellow, is after all a nobleman; perhaps he had

> much of the complexion which in late-coming members of long-descended races we qualify today as effete; but his tone might have served for the battle-cry of some deep-chested fighting ancestor.

(Tarzan was both a member of the House of Lords and his own deep-chested fighting ancestor: crude, but effective.) And oh, those revolutionaries! Lionel Trilling in the introduction to the book thinks James had a remarkable grasp of such as them, and it's true that Trilling is an old acquaintance of Whittaker Chambers; but George Woodcock, who is an anarchist himself as well as a writer, refuted this contention in an essay a few years ago; and for my part, I, who have known a few home-grown Hyacinths in California, find James's revolutionaries about as probable as the half-men half-apes that guard the jewels of Opar for their High-Priestess La: Hollywood wouldn't have to touch a hair of their pointy little heads.

One of the chief, essential facts about both James and Burroughs is this: they were blatant snobs. (By the way, the first of the two test passages was by James, the second by Burroughs.) Their heroines are swooningly beautiful and high-born, and the prose describing them glitters and shimmers; James, being complicated, makes his princess *also* destructive and tormented. Their ignoble characters, whether good or bad, are patronized indulgently; Burroughs, being simple, makes them *also* ugly. In a word, a title gets you preferential treatment. With a title Hyacinth would never have been called by the author "a little bastard bookbinder". If Millicent Henning had been Lady Millicent, James would never have put her in this sentence:

> They had taken possession of a couple of chairs placed there to the convenience of that superior part of the public for which a penny is not prohibitive, and Millicent, of whom such speculations were highly characteristic, had devoted considerable conjecture to the question of whether the functionary charged with collecting the penny would omit to come and demand his fee. Miss Henning liked to enjoy her pleasures gratis.

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A lot of us like all this not only because the stories are adequate to suspend disbelief for a while, but also because one of the essential facts about us who enjoy either James or Burroughs, or both, is this: we are secret snobs. Maybe not the genuine article like the two Masters themselves, not the pure sort "that dearly loves a lord" (in submaster Maugham's phrase); but we respond to this snobbism, however obliquely and shamefacedly—we sons of St. Louis business men, provincial headmasters, New York tailors, or Indiana farmers. Because we think we're better than other people in some essential respect, we dearly love good improbable stories told by snobs with easy consciences. Because we know we oughtn't to think so, and because we know that in some even more essential respect we aren't better, we are especially fond of James: his dazzling, enchanting, incredible Princess is in the end revealed to be morally vile and weak, for which she is punished dreadfully—and most gratifyingly.

"The poet is one who consents to dream about reality." Good enough; no fantasy is pure, alas, not even Burroughs'. But it seems to me that reality was only a portion of what James was dreaming about in *The Princess Casamassima*, to such an extent that he was not always sure which was which, and that the least a commentator can do is to point out this fact. However, this is not the line, not part of the profounder significance, of the figuring forth to be found in the book, as you can see by reading the introduction. All this is, is an unambiguous, wry-necked cock of a fact.

I am willing to admit that I may be crotchety. But I plead bad luck in interpretation. For example, the egg which a hen laid in my mouth one night that summer I was sixteen.

At the time, when eggs were eggs to me, it was a disquieting and startling event, but the pleasure I remembered from seeing that handsome egg, and feeling it slip into my mouth, so dominated my memory of the experience that nothing else about it mattered. A few years later, however, I read *The Interpretation of Dreams*, that anti-escape book, that book for re-imprisoning escapees, and I learned to hate that egg. First I took it as an anal-erotic symbol; the hen was a nice big fluffy motherly old bird (*motherly*, get it?) and I was, at the time I was reading, convinced that I'd been

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stuffed with a lot of wasteful attitudes by my mother. Presently it occurred to me that the egg was really a symbol of something from either the oral or the genital stage of my infantile eroticism or even, for all I knew, from the latency period; but trying to thread my way among the perversions which this notion entangled me in depressed me off and on for years.

Then came *The White Goddess* and I was immensely set up, for a while. The hen (a *she*) had been a *White* Leghorn, and had sort of been levitating a few inches above me in a supernatural way. So maybe that egg had also been a fructifying sperm of inspiration eggplanted by the Goddess upon my eager lips (*inspire,* from the Latin "to breath in"). This was a whole lot better than Freud, but the catch was that I couldn't see any results of this divine fecundating. In fact, there *aren't* any results, except this essay.

No more interpretation: let the egg be the given, my lopsided, indecent, absurd, yet incredibly marvelous donnée (as James would so elegantly have put it). However, even as an Easter egg is dyed, hidden and found again, so my egg must endure being decorated with my fantasies; I hide it in my mind for long periods and am pleased to come across it again as now, to metaphysically dye it again, being, as I have been ab ovo, a fantast. For the egg, the irreducible brute egg, the egg an sich, a double-yolker I bet by the size of it, the egg's the thing. Laid by a clucking hen with spotless tail-feathers, accepted by my pursed lips, yet that egg remains in my memory perfect in mid-air between, as in a still from a movie, neither hovering nor falling nor dropped, just there, a great big clean egg, dyed or undyed signifying egg.

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W. G. VAN KEUREN

The Isles of Greece

(For John Meston)

The mountains look on Mazatlán—
And Mazatlán looks on the sea.
What shall I do? Acquire more tan?
This country has no history:
Only a past of blood on stone;
And Indian altars overgrown.

True, I could take the past to fish
With sunburned tourists from the north;
Gasp as the blue sail of my wish
Wrenches my arms and struggles forth;
Shed my unease and fishing go—
But sailfish are not Mexico.

There is no blazing beach at noon,
Which curves away from the white hotel!
All men make beachheads on the moon,
And have romantic lies to tell.
Mazatlán is green with mold;
Its deadly, lunar hills are cold.

I saw the jungle from the plane,
High in the clean sky looking down:
A thousand thousand years in vain—
Now see the jungle in the town!
This race has darkness in its eyes
To make a gunman's hackles rise.

I saw the bitter desert, too,
Cactus and distances and rock:
Every man who looks at you
The sun's brass-knuckled fist has struck!

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Shimmering heat, a salt-white haze,
Enshrouds the straggler in that gaze.

Even the girls, whose smoky breath
And kisses set our flares alight,
Have memories alive with death:
Rivers as warm and black as night;
Swamps, where scared, scarred, floundering
Conquistadors hunt the Aztec king.

Yesterday, in the market-place,
Where flies swarm in the running filth,
I watched a boy with an eaten face—
And took no pride in luck or wealth.
How had he managed to survive?
Whose candles kept him still alive?

While trembling there upon three legs
A starved dog raised his head and swayed
Toward food—fighting his way to beg;
A rotting hole at his shoulder-blade.
I turned away and could not meet
The savagery which thronged the street.

But everywhere I went the same
Cruelty stood with a glittering knife:
The sick, the blind, the halt, the lame,
Fought with their forbears, begged for life,
And had their throats cut for their pains:
Every curb was splashed with stains.

Last night we drank with fifty men
And four strong whores on Peso Hill.
My strength was as the strength of ten—
Until the mescal made me ill.
The room stank like a lion's cage;
Rank with frustration, heat and rage.

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Pierced, *Ah, pietà!* upon the bar,
A graybeard slumped in the lap of love.
The walls shook for the floorshow's star,
More desert-cock than promised dove.
Men postured, sang, and yelled for more—
And I was sick on the concrete floor,

And reeled outside to a cab; and fled
Back to my room and my sweating dreams:
A gray dog trembled near my bed;
A lizard scurried along the beams;
Christ unrecognized slumbered in
Malinche's arms at the house of sin.

This morning pterodactyls wheel
Before my window—the pelicans
Have comic eyes. I always feel
Grateful to these comedians.
They've flapped their stubby bodies far
From what they were to what they are.

Down on the steps an urchin plays
With a spotted cat on a piece of string:
A tiger. It has changed in ways
And centuries of no following:
The child betrays no trace of awe,
No fear of the dainty, lifted paw.

All things evolve toward God except
The merciless, crouching heart of man;
Which looms and prowls and has not slept
For hunger since the world began.
Prehistoric, huge, man goes;
Pacing the world's wide Mexicos.

The mountains look on Mazatlán—
And Mazatlán looks on the sea:

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And here I sit, a mortal man,
Lamenting my mortality;
A traveler in a sunlit land,
With a morning drink beside his hand.

Tomorrow's plane, true phoenix, lifts
Already landing, from the earth:
Bearing us with silver gifts
And trinkets skyward to rebirth;
Back to the towns of steel and stone;
To elegant altars overgrown.

And that white city which we seek
Like Lucifer through the upper air,
Shining beyond some distant peak,
Marvelous in the sunset there,
Does not exist—recedes, recedes,
Before the evidence of our deeds.

Allagash Pool

Here at the pool, tied to a stub of pine,
Alone in the canoe, I sit and cast;
Over and over, stripping out the line,
Stripping it in, until the day is past.
The dusk comes down the river like the chill
Of years; lingers in mist along the bend;
Darkens the cedars; blacks out Allagash hill.
The flyrod questions, questions, without end.

Down in the depths I see them turn like swords,
Slab-sided trout, hook-jawed and powerful;
Up from the lake in tantalizing hordes,
And ranked and ordered here to greet the fall.
Another frost will find them far upstream

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And spawning in the rips. They will not take.
But still I cast and cast, as in a dream:
Half for my skill, half for a memory's sake.

This pool was fished in nightly by the men
Who built the ruined trestle standing there.
Crews swarmed the country by the hundreds then.
You find their old iron rusting everywhere.
Cant-dog and peavey bucks, they left behind
Three feet of bark in Umbazukskas pond:
Hullings and history. Yet all that kind
Has swaggered back to Bangor and beyond.

Here trout fled from slow, wading caribou
When Allagash forest stood untouched in Maine:
Space between trees to drive a wagon through;
A length of aisle no eye will meet again.
The caribou left with the timber, legend says;
The deer came later, drawn in by the slash.
My own eye grieves for change, loves what it sees:
Under the dry-ki trout sidle and flash.

Much has been altered, many I knew are gone:
The black water never ceases to flow.
Yet praise god the blazing fish still spawn,
And searching finds them, even as years ago.
I loose the tie, and stand upright to pole;
Slide on a current that reflects no light.
A wind hisses and grows as I leave the pool
And check downstream. Yes, it will storm tonight.

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RONALD PERRY

Two Poems after the Laotian

Sestina: For a Landscape

Under the Chinese eaves the wind
Waits. "There is dust on every
Thing in Asia." Overnight the river
Falls, and stone acres of islands
Rise dryly out of the dry water,
Dryly rising, without a sound

To mark their coming, nor any sound
To tell us, as we love, that the wind
Will come again, over the water
Or out of a stone; but every
Where, when the wind stops, islands
Appear and disappear in the river,

Involve us in what the river
Is, in its deeps, and "of its sound
The deepest part", becoming islands
While we sleep, after the wind
Has done its work, and every
Crumbled town under the long water

Sleeps. Then the air is like water,
And no boats dare the wild river
For its wilderness' sake; but every
Where the islands sink, to sound
Its darks and deeps. As the wind
Waits, the Chinese islands

Reappear, all ghosts—islands
Rising in a woman's shape, as the water
Falls, and under the eaves the wind
Assumes another shape: as the river

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Fails, and falls, without a sound
To tell its death, although every

One knows when it is dead; every
One sees its curious keys—islands
Conjured out of sleep, to sound
The air's deep height. Now the water
Drowns, and dies, and still the river
Falls, but "something in the wind"

Tells of islands, without sound,
As the dying river kills every
Town, and the water kills the wind.

Autumn Song

Wind from the enormous East
Walks on the ancient instruments,
Scattering from its giant fist
An incandescent opulence:

Dry leaves! Dry leaves! Nothing is
What it was; all is possessed:
The fields, the burning villages,
The paper dragon on its nest,

Are changing in the sudden spell
That falls between their silences.
Eyes into leaves, we cannot tell
It on our leafing thumbs: "Good news

Of death"—but from the lonely East
A zither or a drum laments.
And still, the wind! This Autumn is
At last, like us, perpetual.

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CHARLES GULLANS

The Moor, Haworth

The voices carried by the muted wind
Mingle so indistinctly with its motion,
The ear, however sharp, cannot prescind
The intelligent from random soft explosions.

Then watch the wind in motion on the ground:
The drying gorse, the heather, and the bracken
Move with a brisk confusion, and the sound
Will sometimes deepen and will sometimes slacken.

What is it grieves or what is it rejoices?
The silences conceal the depth of sound:
Within the pauses of the cold air, voices,
The other and the alien tongues, abound.

Beneath the crisp, coarse fronds and spiny branches,
The minor multitudes maintain their station—
Shrill, broken, and distracted noise advances,
But they will keep their furtive isolation.

Whatever griefs, whatever joys they sing,
They do not speak, they merely come and go:
Though all about me voices seem to spring,
They are not any voices that I know.

ELDER OLSON

Mirror

The gown falls fold on fold.
Sway in those burnished coils,
Lift your delicate head,

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Lean to your mirror, stare
Into those brilliant eyes
Till they grow dark and bleak.
This is not vanity,
Disliking what you see;
Gaze on: you too surmise
The bitter secret there.
Press your hand to your breast,
You too are appalled:
What you thought your love
Was nothing but the cold,
The ravaging inner cold,
That drives the wilderness snake
Into the woodsman's bed.

A Dream for a Sad Lady

Troubled lady, sleep.
Sleep turns all to dream,
Time turns every woe
To legend or song at last.
Sleep, and sleeping, dream
Today was long ago:

Dream of an age past:
Music wafts over the waters,
In a cloud-mirroring sea
Drifts a delicate ship.
Beneath a light canopy
A moon-pale Empress dreams:
You are the dream she dreams.
At her feet a slave
Holds some harp-like instrument, sings
Of legendary things
To the singing strings:
It is your grief she sings.

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

I Will Tell You One Thing: A Letter from India

DEAR M—

INDIA IS AN INTERESTING PLACE; and whether I'm really making the best use of my time here in using some time up writing to you about it, I rather doubt. But you know my kindly nature; and you are also going to pay me, *isn't it?* So here you are. The Englishman in the Sub-Continent. Well, the Indians and the Pakistanis are looking for natural resources; but all the time they have one great resource which is part of the modern world, not something from the Ancient East, and which is also, if not from nature, at least by now second nature. How much would it be worth to the United States, in hard cash, to have say six million more or less fluent speakers of Russian? And if this is not enough to bring out the point, how much more would it be worth, again in hard cash, if through historical accidents those six million stood nearest to the centres of cultural, commercial, industrial, governmental and educational power? Here is the situation of English in India. In fact, English means more even than this in India. It is the great linguistic tool of modernity. It is not a cultural fact merely, but technological. The English speaker who visits India is likely enough to have his attention taken up with things that are more obvious: the American sense (and waste) of space; the beautiful and dignified European houses (Palladian, Greek revival—perhaps "colonial" is the aptest word), surrounded so often by transplanted English rose gardens and declining so often into weathered neglect of deep orange and flaking umber; the water-buffaloes plodding unconcernedly down the middle (and therefore the whole) of the narrow city lanes; the beautiful costumes; the beautiful hands everywhere; the barbers who shave their customers as they squat on the pavement; the *sadhus* who tramp the hill roads of Southern India; the formidably perceptive servants, the sometimes formidably unperceptive bigwigs (a surprise this); the unpeopled, lightless landscape (so different from Europe) below an aircraft at night; the delicious curries, the curried horseradish (that is the knockout blow); the grimly institutional afternoon teas. But when he can spare the time from this tripper's kaleidoscope, what may interest him as much as anything is that gigantic and invisible linguistic fact. In this country, having the language that he has by nature is like having an enormous and thriving coalfield.

Not altogether. Coal cannot fade back into the ground or deteriorate until it becomes commercially useless. English can; and here,

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moreover, it might. In the past, it has been at a high standard not because it was well taught, but because (educationally a dozen times more effective) it was the medium through which arithmetic and geography and everything else was taught. This is no longer the case in the national education system, where English has been replaced by the regional vernacular—Hindi in most of northern India, Tamil or Telegu or Gujarati or whatever else it may be elsewhere. English remains the medium of teaching in most of the schools and colleges which have descended from old mission schools, British or American, and which are now purely educational institutions with a large majority of non-Christian pupils, and widely regarded by educated Indians themselves as giving the best education available in the subcontinent. It is sometimes said that even in these schools the standard of English is falling, because (and nothing could be more proper) much more time than formerly is given to the vernacular tongue.

All in all, the Indians might lose English in the course of a generation. It is not like a coalfield so much as a great mercantile marine, constantly needing attention, slow to repair once it has been neglected. Everyone on the spot seems to be aware of this: hostility to English and a sense that it could be dispensed with as a national asset may have been strong ten years ago, but now they have disappeared. My own clearest evidence of that came in Delhi, when with time to give only one lecture I was invited to talk on trends in modern literary criticism in the Department of not English but Hindi, with Hindi and English students mingling in the audience, and the professors of Hindi and of English beside me on the platform. But there was evidence for it at every university I visited in the welcome of the teachers; in their desire on all hands to visit and study in Britain (if not in the United States, and whichever it might be makes no difference to this train of thought); in the extraordinary concentration of attention among student audiences (one would suppose that scores of young people were practising hard as hypnotists); and in the semi-circles of questioning, arguing students who sometimes wedged me unmercifully against the wall after I had finished. After a very short period of wondering whether I might be a spellbinder in spite of everything, I realized that —of course—there was no personal meaning to any of this. The language, the literature, the West itself was what was wanted; the individual's function, my function, was a merely oesophagus one.

I suspect that, paradoxically, this very intimacy with English is often at the root of mistakes in English, of that "Babu" use of the language, fluent and delightful if faintly ridiculous, which is so well known and so widespread. It is wrong to think that Europeans never speak or write an equivalent of Babu: foreign tourist brochures, and the catalogue of a southern European learned-journal dealer which comes to me sometimes, show the opposite. On the other hand, mistakes one hears or sees in India must be set against the variety of the

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users. The menial servant in an Indian hotel picks up some English from one has no idea where, says to a visitor "dhobi-man not coming, sir, coming now" (which I still can't really make out), and supplies a good cheap story that lasts for months. More relevant than variety of users, is the variety of *uses* to which the language is put. Every speaker of a foreign language knows the sharp frontier between competence in general, and competence for special purposes: describing how to mend the lawn-mower, drafting a business letter, putting up a formal notice, conveying overtones of status, condescension, or cosiness and so on. Indians do all these things and many more in English; do them with a knowledge of the language that is often amateur and oral in origin ("niddle embroidery", I found in a shop advertisement in one bazaar; to what passing Scotswoman of the perhaps distant past does that go back?), and do them moreover with a gusto and éclat which means that sometimes they use the language with a genuine creativeness.

Advertisements will again show what I mean. A large notice outside a toyshop-cum-drugstore which reads "Toys and Toilets" (i.e. toilet requisites) is just a Westerner's excuse for a guffaw. So, more engagingly, is this classified advertisement in a paper:

As owners of sick dogs / Birds, what better guarantee than B—
Kennel's Thirteen Years of Unprecedented Success?

Other cases of missing the English nuance of a phrase need to be grasped quickly by the visitor if he is not to misunderstand his reception. "I could even do that for you" does not imply that the speaker's generosity is being strained, it simply means "I could do that for you as well." "That's all right," with no softening addition, often means, in exact English usage, something like "I happily waive my legitimate grievance." In India it is used all the time, and it simply means "it's a pleasure" or "don't mention it." "I will tell you one thing" was the constant refrain of a sub-curator who condescended to act as guide. Sometimes, though, the deviations from Western usage reveal new possibilities, explore the subject, seem even to issue invitations to the Empsonian critic. "If they don't bother to do it, that is their outlook," and the shop-front which read "Largest Manufacturers of the Sports Industries in India," are errors of the sort that come from half-conscious insight. And if these reveal social values, the café which announced itself as "New Modern Coffee and Lunch Home" (this was in the outskirts, the ghastly unhomely outskirts, of Bombay) ought to be said to create them.

I should be sorry to put too much weight on that one instance, glimpsed joyfully as I hurried past in a car; but it brings out clearly a vital and basic fact. There will be, perhaps always, certainly for a generation, one immensely strong force tending to make English in India seem not exactly right to the tidy-minded Westerner. The

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European acquires our language as a tool for making contact with a foreign people or their written documents. His own world proceeds independently. English in India is genuinely what I was being told it was all the time, not a foreign but a second language; one which the Indians *build into their culture* and through which that culture is itself, in its modern form, in part built. When a train passenger wishes to dispute with the guard or complain of intruding third class passengers (themselves fluent English speakers) he changes to English. Over the whole of southern India, and as between the south and the north, the language is still a kind of *lingua franca*. In a hundred different ways, it is something for home use in the sub-continent. Therefore, all the time, it is under pressure from another cast of mind, another code, another and deeply different cultural achievement. One university librarian's whispered "do you wish to wash yourself or ease?" as I left his office for a meeting, seems to me to issue from a distinctly Indian kind of courtesy, one which is chattily relaxed and informal less easily than the English kind, but blunt and personal if anything more easily. The result is, here, a kind of blunt formality of phrase which is not an idiom in the English language because the social attitudes which lie behind it are not quite idioms of English life. Clearer still is the case of the young Pakistani who sought my autograph as a writer of verse, and added "also write, please, one of your beautiful couplets." What he was doing here was presumably to make couplet mean *ghazal* (obviously he had never looked at a line of what I have written, and I don't hold it against him). Then, the literary ideal which lies, assured, behind the concept of the *ghazal,* helped him to an easy, unquestioning, unsafeguarded use of "beautiful" which is barely idiomatic in English today, unless you wish to imply . . . well, to you, M——, the nuances are clear enough. All in all, it is easy enough to understand why, shortly after Independence, there were Indians who argued for the development of "Indian English" as a language in its own right, and going its own way after the model of American English. The idea seems to have been discarded, I think because of the growing and natural strength of the vernacular languages; but if it were not for them, it would be a natural development.

You might at this point, perhaps, require me to say what I mean by an Indian culture which is different from British: on the ground that anything which is seen to be different, is seen to be something. In answer, I should know some points where to begin, though hardly what to say: as is natural enough, no one in his senses offers to diagnose the culture of a continent on the strength of a visit the length of a long vacation. One line of thought that would lead deep into India is why the women seem clearly more different from Westerners than the men; and more important, seem (uniting sharp discernment and a bland willingness to discuss freely such things as the national birth control policy, to a strange and almost guileless kind of serenity,

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composure)—seem over and over again to be more impressive than the men. Another line would be the total effect on cultivated life—on all life—of the basic fact that over a quite large range of life's affairs the machine and the hand still compete on something like equal terms. This is reflected in the daily tenour of life. The servants in India make one think of Britain not in the nineteenth century, but the eighteenth. Their presence everywhere leads, curiously, to at once a more humane and a harsher pattern of social intercourse. More humane, because wherever you turn, things done for you in the West by machines are done here by living people. Because of this the daily quality of domestic life is different. The blissful, or fretful self-preoccupation of the Western small family or childless couple exists (even when the fundamentally different pattern of the "joint family" is not relevant) much less easily. The inconveniences of old fashioned equipment in a house are less both to those who do the housework (because they do it as their full-time job) and those who enjoy the results; and the need to modernize, to mechanize is thus less urgent. These are not simply smug reflections on staying in rich people's houses. One has to be poor indeed never to send a parcel that a post office servant carries from the man at the parcel-sending counter to the man who tears off and licks the stamps (instead of thumping a stamp machine); never to travel in a cycle-rickshaw where the human being is the engine (and the flowery hoods and flowery poetic names for the vehicles still carry the traditions of a genuine folk art and a genuinely living mythology); never to buy for example a pair of shoes that the maker stretches up from stitching to sell. A thousand things like this help to make the quality of ordinary life less impersonal, more humane, than with us. But it is harsher because they cannot be effective completely. The serving hands do not belong to a machine, but neither do they belong to a friend. In the West, I suspect, the average man neither gives nor receives what is unmistakeably an order from one year's end to the next. It is an intangible difference, but profound. To make a short story of it, this is perhaps why the foreigner finds himself told that "please" and "thank you" are infrequent in the vernacular tongues; their constant omission means much less than it would in English, but doesn't quite mean nothing.

These are tentative ideas. What seems less so is that there is a real difference between India and Britain in something which has in the end to be called a matter of literature. At least until the recent past (and that it is not true any longer is one of our great anxieties) the cultural achievement of Britain was to a notable degree embodied in its literature; and sustained from generation to generation by a knowledge of that literature. The Bible and Shakespeare, and to a lesser extent Bunyan and Defoe, Dickens and Wordsworth and Milton, have been major landmarks for generations in the cultural horizons not merely of men of letters but of a very substantial part of the whole

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people. Their works have been, as much as anything, what the ordinary man would turn to as he sought, perhaps half consciously, to make his life broader and richer and more significant. In fact one could go further, and suggest that in British life the literary document, at least for a time, occupied more of the whole cultural spectrum, as it were, than has been the case in most societies. (One recalls how English literature is the greatest of modern western Europe, English music and painting, within the same comparison, among the least.) Ours is a peculiarly verbal, peculiarly literary world.

India is not. It would be a ridiculous exaggeration to say "here is a culture without a literature"; but all the same, what one might call the basic literary fact is of radically another kind. The great literature of Sanskrit is a literature of the comparatively remote past, and it cannot filter through, as Shakespeare or Dickens has done, to the ordinary or even the illiterate man; not, anyhow, to the same extent and with the same immediacy. Hindustani has something of a continuous literature (based partly upon translations of the Sanskrit epics) from the sixteenth century; and Hindustani in this context has a loose sense, there are important mediaeval works in nearly allied tongues which are now village dialects spoken perhaps by small numbers. I doubt, though, that they have a place in any existing cultural continuity, and I learned of their existence through chancing to meet a French researcher. In Central and Southern India, and Ceylon, when one enquires of ordinary educated people about the literature in the regional vernacular, one is repeatedly given the same story (and for the moment it is the story one is given that matters, not how the specialist could correct it). That story is, that in the last thirty or forty years, maybe more, there has been a vernacular literature imitating Western models; but that otherwise there is a folk literature (and a folk drama, to which in more than one of those languages contemporary playwrights are turning); and there is a scholarly literature often remote in period, remote in its literary diction, and remote in being largely religious or mystical. All these languages may contain literary masterpieces and may have histories even more ancient than that of English; but the point is, that according to the general verdict they do not seem to offer a continuity of literary achievement, in a more or less vernacular tongue, and coming down to the present day, home to men's business and bosoms.

This verdict—and as I said it is the verdict rather than the true nature of the literatures, if that remains widely unknown, which counts—may in part result from the fact that for the Indians, the English language was followed by English literature. Moreover, this has had the *cachet* of the ruling class and also of social superiority. One lecturer in English told me that teachers of English would not, at least until very recently, have been willing to take part in a joint degree course in English and a vernacular literature: to have done so

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would have seemed to compromise with what was educationally unacceptable. Perhaps another reflection, though indirect, of the strength of these feelings came when I enquired in Pakistan why I had not encountered more newly-appointed professors of Chinese, and more interest, since Independence (which Pakistanis usually call Partition), in building up a strong tradition of studies in the culture of the other great Asiatic centre. The answer came, not as a matter of conscious and debatable choice but as an unquestioned fact which I had presumably overlooked, simply that in these parts the educated people had always turned to Europe and especially to Britain for their cultural ties and interests, and that therefore it was of course natural that they should continue to do so. The clearest illustration of all, though, concerns Victorian literature. Here beyond question one can see that English literature came genuinely to do for the Indians what is more often done for a people by the great works of their own tongue. Ghandi was not alone in reading Ruskin and finding that it changed his life; and a phrase like "Great Victorians" often seems in India to have an unsuspected currency value; drawing its credit not from the realm of controversy, revivals, and literary manoeuvering, but from genuine and major experiences in the speaker's growing up through books: from a level of experience earlier and more direct and powerful than literary controversy can perhaps ever be.

As perhaps you have guessed already, for it is the sort of thing which would readily occur to you, there is a counterpart to all these things. Proportionally much more than in Britain or, I think, America, the culture of the people is embodied in and transmitted by things other than the written, the literary word. Indian dancing? I doubt it. Certainly, there is more than one kind of Indian dancing which can be mastered only by years of intense study and practice; which embodies several levels of significance, and any kind either of emotion or the discipline of emotion; and beside which all Western dancing looks, briefly, an improbable pastime for a rational species. Certainly, in northern Ceylon I dropped in on a town prize-giving day, and watched two grown-up schoolgirls perform a Rada-Krishna dance which for buoyant insouciance, for sheer ordered exuberance, was like nothing I had seen for years; and certainly, this is the kind of art through which the serious and the popular tradition may come together, for the Rada-Krishna dance may be seen at any level from God-visits-the-stricken-soul to Boy Meets Girl (my two young ladies envisaged mainly, I felt, and delightedly, the latter). The contrast between this and the ghastly schoolroom hornpipes or soulful poses to trailing arpeggios which followed it (the westernized part of the programme) was decisive, was final. What meant something, and what meant nothing, was plain enough. But this was in Tamil land (where alone *Bharata Natyam* has done something like survive continuously) and I suspect that it was something of a freak even there. In Madras I sat

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in at an ordinary lesson hour in the school of one of the great dancers in this tradition, Bala Saraswati. The monsoon roared down on the palm leaf roof, a wooden Victorian clock stood on the table, a new bicycle was propped up in one corner, a local Brahmin camped inconspicuously in another, in a third there were chairs piled up to the rough timber rafters. The instructress and her musicians squatted on the ground, courteous to the visitors but at once lost again in their tasks. Nothing could have seemed less arty, more genuine. But after all it was a school, and the best of the pupils—her dancing a sheer delight—was the daughter of the local professor of Sanskrit.

About music one can feel surer. There is, of course, a popular Indian music, and also a classical music of the utmost subtlety and refinement; but there seems to exist a real continuity between them. I never saw ordinary people dancing, but I heard them singing, traditionally, over and over again. The greybeard who came one afternoon in Baroda to bathe (in a loincloth) beneath the water tap outside my bathroom window squatted on the ground, soaped himself, and quietly sang the less virtuoso musical equivalent of what I had heard the week before in a classical programme at a Radio Station. In the north, I was taken to hear Muslim *qawali* singing at the weekly gathering before the shrine of a saint. Here was a popular celebration, in the open air and the dark, with hurricane lamps and (so calm it was) candles, a boy lighting joss-sticks, the people sitting on the flagstones or bringing their flowers as offerings, sweets for the children to eat, and one group after another coming forward to chant their devotional hymns (which they address, with mounting animation and indeed passion, to the shrine) accompanied by the drum and a simple accordion. Often, clearly, the singers were amateurs and poor men; but one of them I knew to be a graduate from the local college of Indian music (where, incidentally, I heard the finest virtuoso clarinet playing in my life). Of course, there would be analogues to this in Britain; but that is not to the point. What I have in mind is that these are among the things which sustain a cultural continuity where that is not done by what we are most familiar with as doing it: books.

That was a simple religious celebration, something not unlike a festival; and religion, with its festivals, is surely something else which, multifariously, carries forward the traditions of life of the people. Religion does not do this by festivals alone. The holiness of certain animals, and a general sense of kinship with other forms of life, and of evil in destroying them, are religious things which affect the whole quality of daily existence, and do so in ways which struck me as one of the most characteristic about the country. A man, wealthy and modern enough to have an umbrella (though the goatherds have them, miles from anywhere on the Deccan plains), quietly stretched out his third finger in the middle of Baroda bazaar, so as to acquire merit by touching a white cow; but that was an overt illustration. The eagles

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that glide and settle only just above the tourists in the Ajanta Gorge, the chirruping geckos everywhere on the walls and ceilings of houses, the mongoose that came every day into my host's house, just to see, the sparrows all over the breakfast room of a luxurious modern hotel, the crow that sailed into the lecture hall once when I was full sail myself (it unhurriedly left), the kite that dropped like a plummet to steal a fish from a man's basket amid a crowded market, the monkey that looked in on my bedroom from the balcony door one morning, the other monkey that sped in front of the car to a pile of grain in a shop, filled his mouth to bulging, and whisked away—all these were merely the counterpart from wild things of the tame animals that thread the streets everywhere in all save the biggest and most modernized of the cities. Religion has not simply meant vegetarianism, but, ultimately, another way of living with the rest of animated nature. In the temples, to feed the crows or the monkeys may be part of what we call matins. (So, I found, was superbly high-spirited jazz music on the village oboe and the drums.)

There are many festivals, they spread, they overlap. Dasera has not finished in one town before Dewali has begun in the next—or so it seems. Dewali, the festival of lights, is held in honour of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, and is especially the festival of the merchant caste. As one might expect, those upon whom the goddess has lavished her favours are less attentive than the poor who have hopes for the future; but the poor are numerous enough to spread everywhere the soft amber-brown lights of their mustard seed oil, glimmering from tiny earthenware dishes with a twist of cotton floss for a wick. Dasera, the "Ten Nights", is more varied, goes on longer, and is both religious and more than religious. On the one side are the great midnight processions, lit by bearers who stride along with carbide lamps, fueled from big mahogany boxes, carried on their heads. In the procession which I saw myself, float after float came by, big lorries painted to a circus gaiety, as lorries always are in India, and on them Arjuna, the Lord Shankara, the Lord Krishna (plus that life-giving flute), Vishnu, Rama and his wife and brother, the whole mythology that is still familiar to the common people, pageanted by statuesque men and by very tired children falling asleep as they snuggled down in lotuses, or perched on symbolical scales, or in baskets dizzily aloft at the end of a vastly long spear (the magic of the whole show seemed to lie in very ingenious, and invisible, wrought iron supports, which permitted some admirable tricks of apparent levitation). As for the more ambitious and modern pieces, they merely brought out how the people were *in* the procession, and not merely casual spectators. Krishna under the tree of stars (Yeats scholars wake up) depended on a constellation of electric bulbs, and the power for them was supplied by clumsy leads that the crowd held up head-high all along the line for a mile, and passed from hand to hand whenever someone got tired or wanted to move on.

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Here was the religious side of the festival; but what it kept vivid for the people was in part the mythology of their popular drama. That evening, in fact, three dramas of Rama (the *Ram-lilla*) were being given in different parts of Lucknow. Rama was one of the incarnations of Vishnu, and thus the plays were in a sense genuinely religious; but the one I spent the evening at (I abandoned another when the microphone broke down) was an extraordinary cross between a Miracle play, old-fashioned pantomime, and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. *Place,* a big square in the seventeenth century part of the town; *audience,* upwards of a thousand people, sitting mainly on the ground, men and women quite separate, coming and going all the time; *stage,* an ambitious proscenium arch which must have been brought out year after year, great wings running down one side of the square to conceal the dressing-places, and the whole thing lit with innumerable (and excessively orange) fairy lights; *actors,* all local artisans who took the same parts every year and trained their own successors. The dramatic presentation was varied. Sometimes it consisted in recitation from the epic text by a Brahmin who was priest at the temple round the corner. He was also, in a somewhat general sense, producer: and looked exactly like a prosperous Anglican dean, save that he was dressed in a *dhoti* and at one point, sensing that the musicians (accordion and drums, they sat at one corner of the stage throughout) needed extra zip, he suddenly broke into a highly expert and infectious little jiving dance for about one second. Often enough he also broke into a kind of recitative, in a melodious voice as loud as a bull. Sometimes the plot proceeded by arias; often by dialogue spoken to music; sometimes by silent mime (one reason why the sixteen-year-old girl who took the part of Rama could inconspicuously chew *pan*—or was it gum? it wouldn't matter—throughout her performance)—mime with a commentary by the narrator or even by another actor. As you can see already, dramatic illusion did not exist. There were two microphones on the stage throughout. The Brahmin, radiating amiability, placed them handily for each speaker or singer before an important piece, dropped one three inches when Rama's young brother had a few lines, and bent one down to the ground before a very moving lament which the demon-king's sister delivered lying down, after having carefully arranged her wig so that it hid her face. The backcloth went up and down as required while the action proceeded, the electrician and stage hands walked calmly on and off, or plain across, whenever they needed to. Here was oracular proof of how strong dramatic emotion could issue from ham acting (which in a sense this was throughout) and in a theatre where illusion as a convention simply did not exist. To a student of literature it could scarcely have been a more instructive evening in the most formal sense (which wasn't all that it was). But in our sense it was not at all a literary occasion. It didn't correspond to "going to the theatre": save for amateur groups, there is virtually no

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theatre in India or Pakistan. Clearly it was something of a nodal point in the culture of the people; but it was religious, it was festive, it was social, before it was anything one could call "literature".

You must find out for yourself whether India can preserve these traditions as it is modernised. I don't know, because the issue hasn't yet been really joined, it will take maybe another thirty years to show. Frankly, I doubt it. The world of the car, television set, washing machine, picture magazine, high heel and creased pants always seems to win, and why should India be different in the end? But in case you should want to argue, right or wrong, that there the New will marry with the Old and sustain it, I will slip you the neatest illustration I know of that improbable idea. If you sail across Bombay harbour you have on your right, deep in the wooded hills, the great Siva rock temple of Elephanta; and on your left the new atomic reactor built for India by the Canadians. And the shape worshipped in the innermost temple *shrine, and the shape of that great buoyant silvery-grey reactor (a* sphere with a skirt on), are one and the same shape, the shape of the *lingam,* the most sacred, the oldest source of power in the world . . . *and the best.*

NORMAN N. HOLLAND

Rheum at the Top

IN THESE DAYS, when highbrows and groundlings seem to have less and less to say to one another, a film which (like an Elizabethan play) takes its audience at any level deserves kudos by the kilo. *Room at the Top*[1] has gotten them: the conservative British Film Academy (which is to our own flashy Oscar-givers as tweed to sequins) gave it the top Award as "the best film from any source in 1958." The title, if extravagant at all, is only a little. *Room at the Top* is a tactful film, alert, complicated, moving—add your own adjectives to taste: it is almost unbelievably good. It is almost unbelievable, too, that it is director Jack Clayton's first full-length feature. (In mitigation of unbelief, let it be noted that the gentleman was associate producer of *Moulin Rouge* and *Beat the Devil.*)

Room at the Top has something for everybody. At the tired shoppers' level, it is a film about a faintly wicked, but basically good-hearted

[1] ROOM AT THE TOP: screenplay by Neil Paterson; from the novel by John Braine; directed by Jack Clayton; produced by John and James Woolf; a Romulus production; featuring Laurence Harvey, Simone Signoret, Heather Sears, Donald Wolfit, Donald Houston and Hermione Baddeley.

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young man, who gets mixed up with a married woman, but she drops out of the picture, and he marries Miss Right, the boss's daughter. For the middlebrow hoping for a sort of filmic regional novel, *Room at the Top* offers ("in the best tradition of English semi-documentary") an unblinking picture of the welfare state of life in an industrial town in Yorkshire, and the middlebrow can make much of the fact that the film is based on a novel by John Braine who, if not young enough, is yet angry and a man. And the highbrow (if we may presume) will see in *Room at the Top* a pathetic picture of Everyman's capitulation to society, realized with an astounding complexity of character.

It is almost inevitable, I suppose, that a work of art, to hit all levels of its audience, must start with a cliché. In *Room at the Top,* it's "Industry and Idleness," as in Hogarth's series or any of a host of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century chrematistic writings: the Industrious 'Prentice works hard, withstands temptation, takes his master's daughter out to sing hymns on Sunday, marries her, and ends up Lord Mayor; the Idle 'Prentice neglects his work, drinks, gambles, runs after doxies, and fetches up on Tyburn Tree. Well, progress, to paraphrase the voice of television, is our most important parody, and *Room at the Top* makes Hogarth hodiernal.

In the eighteenth century, most of the interest of the fable was concentrated on the Idle 'Prentice, and the Industrious 'Prentice was a pretty dull fellow. In the twentieth century, it is just the other way around. The Idle 'Prentice—in the welfare state, a low-ranking civil servant—confines his vices to the dog races, a little snooker on Friday nights, beer, and ogling the local trollops. Lumpishly, he settles down with a girl "of his own sort," i.e., who is economically disadvantageous to him.

All the film's interest centers on his chum, the Industrious 'Prentice, one Joe Lampton (Laurence Harvey). An accountant from the wrong side of the tracks, he sets his sights for Susan Brown (Heather Sears), daughter of the town's leading manufacturer. Her family's objections, and the snide remarks of her aristocratic suitor, Jack Wales, have the usual results: she falls in love with Joe. He promptly argues her into being seduced. Meanwhile, though, Joe has been having an affair with Alice Aisgill (Simone Signoret) older, French, and unhappily married to a petty, philandering sadist. Joe vacillates, but after a while, he comes to realize that Susan is pointless and sexless and that his affair with Alice has been more than bedroom gymnastics—it has been the only real happiness he has ever known. But Alice's husband refuses to let her go; Susan's father informs Joe that Susan is pregnant; Joe goes under.

The day the engagement is announced, Alice gets drunk, runs her Citröen into the landscape (at the very place where she and Joe first made love), and is most gruesomely killed. Joe gets drunk and remorsefully seduces a slut from the wrong side of the tracks; he is promptly and savagely beaten up by her teddy boy friends. Patched

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together mentally and physically, Joe marries Susan Brown and drives off with her—crying. The final shot shows the Daimler going up a nicely symbolic hill, the sky grey and empty and full of "room" above it.

My comparison to Hogarth is not mere badinage. *Room at the Top* produces its highly complex ikon much as Hogarth did. It poises a visible and teeming realism against an invisible, idealized self-image. The realism is most obvious in the characters. The film is not afraid to let you see Alice Aisgill's wrinkles with her hey-day in the blood. Susan Brown is everybody's eighteen-year-old dream girl, but with a pedal-pusher brain, a touch of acne, and a tendency to burst out, "Gee, isn't it super!" Joe, the handsome *arriviste,* thinks himself a knave but proves a timid, weak fool, a poor man's Julien Sorel who, whenever he tries to assert himself, becomes mere bluster.

The language is intensely real, idiomatic, richly Yorkshire. When people swear, they swear "bastard" or "old whore", not the usual cinematic euphemisms. And the sex is real, not the "saucy" black lace of the French or the Playtex living orality of American films, but naked, honest sex, talked about as such: Alice says, "It's good between us, Joe. Has it ever been this good for you before," and so on. Both the action and the dialogue are most happily calculated to bring a Blush to the Cheek of a Young Person.

Clayton gets more Hogarthian effects from his use of the background of the frame, that instrument in the film-maker's orchestra most commonly neglected. For example, Joe carries on his courtship of Susan under a particularly vile example of civic statuary. He spends a weekend with Alice in a real bucolic setting with real rain, but Susan he seduces in an unrealistically idyllic old mill. Clayton uses signs for a sort of verbal background (as Hogarth uses paintings). In the corner of a frame showing a slum street, the sign says, "Hope Street." As Alice, deserted by Joe, gets drunk, a sign says, "Betting Prohibited," i.e., Alice took a chance and lost. As Joe accepts congratulations for his engagement to the pregnant Susan, a sign in the background proclaims, "Save Our Children." Perhaps the most striking use of a sign is the huge factory smokestack painted "Brown's" which stands over the town. Joe first sees it, in the opening shots of the picture, when his train comes in. At the end, as a train whistle blows, Joe is dumped by the teddy boys at the edge of a canal. Reflected upside down is the smokestack saying "Brown's"; Joe's hand slips into the water, and the reflection shatters.

The backgrounds (again, as in Hogarth) suggest the idea of crowding—scenes of shoppers thronging the High Street; jammed busses; the young men in a rooming house waiting for a pincurled old gossip to vacate the w.c. As opposed to the packed pubs where Joe and Alice meet, Joe and Susan have a private table when he takes her out. Her father confronts Joe in the almost deserted dining room of the Conservative Club—"room at the top."

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Backgrounds introduce still another element, the child. Throughout the film, children stand as the wide-eyed, innocent, yet accusing, spectators of their elders' actions. An owlish boy watches Joe and Susan tryst in the town library. At their tragic marriage, Joe stares blankly at the choirboys. As he wakes up pulpy and prostrate in a rubbish heap after his drubbing at the hands of the teddy boys, he looks up to see a slum child. The child looks solemnly at him and (in the most striking shot of the whole film) rolls a toy car toward him over a little cliff of dirt—Alice's death made into a "play."

Clayton uses aural backgrounds just as effectively as he does visual. As Joe receives a meaningless offer of a better job out of town (Susan's family's effort to get rid of him), the clatter of machines drowns out his prospective employer's meaningless words. Susan, after her seduction, as she and Joe walk home, chatters on and on: "Do you feel different, Joe? I thought I would feel different, but I don't. Wasn't it the most wonderful thing ever, Joe?" Her voice trails off for a full thirty seconds, a deliciously ironic comment on Joe's unspoken boredom and dissatisfaction. Later, as friends pound Joe's back and pour him champagne to celebrate his engagement to Susan, we (and he) overhear two secretaries reading the grisly details of Alice's death. Throughout the picture, from the opening shot on, the sound of a train, sometimes close, more often in the distance, serves as a kind of *leitmotiv* both for the machine-like society in which Joe lives and for his own traveling—up and down—in that society.

That is, of course, the manifest theme of *Room at the Top,* traveling up or down in the grades of society. Joe, much as he resents the gradations between officers and enlisted men or between the classes of society, is a grader himself, rating women on a scale from one to ten. And by the end, just as Jack Wales was the snobbish upper-class rival to Joe at the beginning, Joe (using the name Jack Wales) is a snobbish upper-class rival to the teddy boy.

One point the film makes is that these grades exist in the mind. The usage is like Hogarth's suggestion of his characters' self-ideals (think of the rake's image of himself in "The Rake's Progress" or the old maid's as she goes to church in "Morning"). The characters are endlessly preoccupied with fictitious images of themselves or others (all except Alice who is unafraid of nakedness). Joe does not so much love the millionaire's daughter as talk himself into loving her image, and she, in turn, fancies him a dear soul trodden down by cruel societee. In the obliging friend's apartment where Joe and Alice spend their illicit matinées, images surround them, old photographs of theatre people. This is the significance of the amateur theatrical group which brings the three principals together—here the fictitious grades are played out to the audience. (As a matter of fact, in the theatre, Alice and Susan play onstage the roles they later play in fact.) This imaging is also a function of the ever-present children—they are the innocent audience to the play of life.

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Traveling up or down the social grades in *Room at the* Top is thus not just social, but psychological. The central image of *Room at the Top* is the scene in which Joe, standing in the bombed-out ruins of his parents' house, looks mutely at a grimy little slum girl playing there. She stares back at him; "This is my house," she says. "It was mine once," says Joe. Just as Joe is a stranger in the slum where he grew up, so each of us becomes a stranger to the psychological grades we leave behind.

This psychological climbing corresponds quite strikingly to the stages of a child's growth. Joe, for example, is pulling himself up out of the muck and the mire of the slums just as a child learns to clean himself; in doing so, he substitutes for the precious filth of his social infancy new precious objects, money, goods, or, as it is called in the film, "her old man's brass." He outgrows thinking of love as a kind of aggressive possession and learns (too late) that love is love. He gives up the almost motherly Alice who provided food for him, tended him—after her death, he clutches the sweater she gave him like a security cloth out of *Peanuts*.

But, as Alice says, someone of Joe's ability should go *outside* the grades; that is where real freedom lies. She herself, being French, is outside the English structure. Their weekend in the country takes them outside; so does the theatrical group. In a very real sense, Joe's defeat stems from his failure to realize that Susan Brown's mansion is not the only place that offers "room at the top"; there is room, too, on the cliff overlooking the town where he and Alice first make love, where she later dies. His return to his bombed-out house in the squalid town where he was born shows him he is free of what he called its "life sentence." Yet, just as he had preferred to remain in the security of a P.O.W. camp during the war (Jack Wales had escaped), so now he trades his new-found freedom for security at the "top." When he goes to tell Susan he will marry her, he stands looking out at the grounds of her estate through a lattice as through the bars of a jail. And after their marriage, she crows, "Till death do us part," but he cries, in part for the dead Alice, in part for his own new "life sentence."

This is the real point *Room at the Top* makes, not a description of life in the welfare state, but a description of life as the social and psychological tragedy of going through stages, of sublimating, accepting more and more complex substitutes for one's real desires. As Alice tried to teach Joe (she had been a teacher before they met), one gets true freedom by going outside the grades and stages, whether by Thanatos, as she by her death went, or Eros, as they by their love might have gone. Within the stages, the Industrious 'Prentice, practising his simple phallic skills, finds at the top, not room, but rheum and a kind of death. As one of Lawrence's characters remarked in similar circumstances, "He's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."

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B. H. HAGGIN

Ballet Chronicle

EPISODES, THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET'S final production in June, was in two parts. The first was Martha Graham's setting of two of the pieces of music by Anton von Webern that were used in the work—the early and traditional Passacaglia Op. 1, richly scored for a large orchestra, and the Six Pieces Op. 6, which exhibited the beginnings of the distinctive Von Webern style. The second was Balanchine's setting of the remaining pieces—the Symphony Op. 21, Five Pieces Op. 10, Concerto Op. 24 and Variations Op. 30 (in that order), which were in the fully developed Von Webern style of wisps of sound in fragments of phrases that made no coherent musical sense to my ears, and finally the marvelously contrived orchestration of the superb six-voiced Ricercare of Bach's *Musical Offering*. Miss Graham's part narrated a story of the life, loves and death of Mary Queen of Scots, with sumptuous costumes by Karinska and on a stage which had handsome decorative forms by David Hays hung in the corners, and a construction in the rear center that was topped by what at first was a throne and later became a scaffold. Balanchine's part was an abstract ballet danced in practice costumes on a stage which retained Mr. Hays's decorative forms.

The modern-dance adherents, and specifically the admirers of Martha Graham, who were in the City Center at the performances of *Episodes*, have one thing in common with the members of the Bolshoi Ballet (who were reported to have been baffled and bored by Balanchine's *Serenade, Symphony in C* and *Agon*): they require that dance movement have story meaning. And they seem to require nothing more: it was enough, apparently, for them to see dancers in costumes which identified them as Mary Queen of Scots, Bothwell, Elizabeth Queen of England, make movements which denoted Bothwell's ambition to be King and his treating Mary "like a drab," or make the movements of a symbolic game of tennis between Mary and Elizabeth; it didn't matter to them, apparently, that the movements which embodied these meanings had nothing beyond that to excite the eye and the mind (as the dance metaphors in Balanchine's *Apollo* do): the mere literal spelling out of these meanings held the Grahamites spellbound, and at the end of this insignificant achievement their frenzied applause brought Miss Graham before the curtain again and again.

As against this poverty of dance imagination and invention behind the façade of costumes, stage decorations and props, Balanchine offered the profusion of what he contrived not only in ballet movement for his own dancers but in modern movement for the modern dancer Paul Taylor whom he used alone in his setting of the Variations Op. 30. In the settings of the Symphony Op. 21 and Concerto Op. 24 that preceded Op. 30 Balanchine carried further, with amazing inventiveness,

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the distortions and contortions of ballet movement he had presented in *Agon,* using more intensively, for example, the bending back of the foot that broke the usual line from thigh to toe. And between Op. 21 and Op. 24, the Five Pieces Op. 10—whose fragmentary substance I believe I once heard provoke an audience to laughter even by itself—was the musical basis for a pas de deux whose negating frustrations and grotesque distortions of the dancers' movements struck the City Center audiences as funny now. The setting of Op. 30 continued all this distortion in its modern-style movement; then the concluding setting of the Bach Ricercare overwhelmed one with its return to ordered beauty in the music and in the ballet movement that was like a further and richer-textured development of Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco*—with groups of the corps providing a context of disciplined regularity for the solo couple that moved with the utmost freedom.

Bertram Ross exhibited impressive agility and control in the first part; and in the second part there were superb performances by Violette Verdy and Jonathan Watts in Op. 21, Diana Adams and Jacques d'Amboise in Op. 10, Allegra Kent and Nicholas Magallanes in Op. 24, Paul Taylor in Op. 30, and Melissa Hayden and Francisco Moncion in the Bach Ricercare, with beautifully precise and sharp work by the corps.

***Notes on Contributors** (cont.)*

ELDER OLSEN returns this Fall to the University of Chicago after a year at Indiana University where he was Visiting Professor of Literary Criticism.

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B. H. HAGGIN's *Listener's Musical Companion* has just been reissued by Anchor Books.

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A new novel by HARVEY SWADOS, entitled *False Coin,* will be published by Atlantic-Little, Brown early in 1960.

IRVING SINGER is Associate Professor of Philosophy at M.I.T.

KENNETH BURKE's *Attitudes Toward History* has recently been reissued in a revised, one-volume edition.

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Reviews

NORTHROP FRYE

World Enough Without Time[1]

FOR SOME TWENTY-FIVE YEARS a group of scholars have met each summer on the shores of Lake Maggiore in Italy to hold a conference in a field that might loosely be described as comparative religion, though what gets compared is, more precisely, the morphology of symbolism. This annual conference has been given the name Eranos: its papers are published in Eranos *Jahrbücher,* and three selections of them have appeared in English. The third, *Man and Time,* is assembled mainly from the 1951 session. The general direction of Eranos is Jungian, and structures of symbolism are seen as emanating from a collective unconscious through a consciousness which has accepted the Jungian shift from a rational ego, opposed to the unconscious, to an individuality in rapport with it. The latter is able to manifest the unconscious in the form of the archetypes, or psychological symbols, which it uses to express itself, in contrast to the logical and discursive structures of rational consciousness.

It must be great fun to attend these Eranos conferences; the published papers have much of value in them, and no one can reasonably deny that Jung is one of the seminal thinkers of our time. This is, however, an age of charismatic leaders in culture and thought as well as in action, and such a leader has two types of followers: the centrifugal ones who find his ideas useful and apply them in their own work, and the centripetal ones who keep revolving around the Master expounding his message for our times. The disastrous effects of making Marx into an intellectual charismatic leader are now patent to the free world; and in Marxism today one finds a good deal of straightforward science mixed up with inspirational harangues on the relation of dialectic materialism to the theory of atomic structure, or the consistency of neo-Lamarckian genetics with Marxism-Leninism. (You argue that both are in accord with modern science, and things equal to the same thing, etc.) And in *Man and Time,* too, there is a good deal of the same type of thing produced by what might be called Jungian com-

[1] MAN AND TIME. Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks. Bollingen Series XXX, 3. Pantheon Books. $5.00. COSMOS AND HISTORY: THE MYTH OF THE ETERNAL RETURN, by *Mircea Eliade.* Harper Torchbooks. $1.35. BIRTH AND REBIRTH, by *Mircea Eliade.* Harper Bros. $3.50. PATTERNS IN COMPARATIVE RELIGION, by *Mircea Eliade.* Sheed and Ward. $6.50. THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE, by *Mircea Eliade.* Harcourt Brace. $4.50. YOGA: IMMORTALITY AND FREEDOM, by *Mircea Eliade.* Bollingen Series LVI. Pantheon Books. $6.00.

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missars. Thus the opening paper, on "Art and Time," by Erich Neumann, hardly contains a single genuine statement about either art or time: it is an elegy on the dilemma of modern man and the crisis of the human spirit and the collapse of the aggressive consciousness in the modern psyche and the rise of the Terrible Mother and all the rest of the Jungian *topoi,* with an occasional gesture in the direction of modern artists asserting that their work illustrates and proves all this. The difference between such homiletic and that of, say, Max Nordau's *Degeneration* in the last century is that the rhetorical tone has shifted from the paternal and indignant to the maternal and solicitous, and that the references are less concrete, if less wrong-headed. Of any positive problem about art and time, such as the treatment of time in Proust or *Finnegans Wake* or the Eliot *Quartets* or Auden's *For the Time Being,* or their counterparts in Continental literature (Rilke gets quoted, but not for anything he said about time) we hear nothing. It is an occupational disease of preachers, whether of the pulpit, the soapbox or the lectern, to proclaim the superiority of their anxieties to all phases of human culture that are not equally obsessed by them, and there is a failure in urbanity here which seems to me more significant than it looks: we shall keep it in mind as we proceed.

Two other lay sermons, Helmuth Plessner's "On the Relation of Time to Death" and G. van der Leeuw's "Primordial Time and Final Time," are sufficiently described by their titles. There are also two papers on time in science. One, Adolf Portmann's "Time in the Life of the Organism," talks mainly about what we used to call instinct in the birds and the bees, and about "the hallowed character of lunar animals," included women, who respond organically to a lunar cycle. A much more elaborate paper, Max Knoll's "Transformations of Science in our Age," lines up parallels between Jungian psychology and modern science. There is, for example, a principle of indeterminacy in Heisenberg's version of the quantum theory, and a "relation of uncertainty" between conscious and unconscious in Jungian psychology, because even Jungians don't claim to know *all* about the unconscious. There are more interesting things in this paper, but some of the analogies are unnerving.

It is characteristic of disciples that they are never quite up to date: it takes all the running *they* can do to keep in the same place. Actually the Master has announced a new theme for this discussion, the theme of "synchronicity," or coincidence. A really staggering coincidence has about it, Jung says, a strong quality of the numinous. We feel simultaneously that there must be some explanation, and that any explanation would be useless to us because it couldn't fit into our customary thinking apparatus. In fact we may almost define a coincidence as a piece of design that we can't use. However, many structures of thought, from astrology and other forms of divination to certain types of mysticism, have been based on the conception of synchronicity. The con-

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ception is one way of trying to impose pattern on the pure flux of our ordinary experience of time, the Heraclitean river into which no one steps twice. Its postulate is that of a pre-established harmony, in contrast to the postulate of causality which underlies science, which is based on our ordinary experience of sequential time, and which we struggle vainly to apply to coincidence when we try to "explain" it. Jung's treatment of this theme is brief and somewhat inconclusive: for example, he considers no type of causation except the efficient cause of ordinary scientific method which always precedes its effect. A formal cause or Aristotelian *telos* might have more relevance to the idea. Still, it's a good speculative rubber bone to chew on, and forms a basis for the really significant part of *Man and Time:* a series of scholarly essays on the conceptions of time found in various religions and cultures.

Among them is a paper on "Time and Eternity in Indian Thought" by Mircea Eliade, a scholar of Roumanian origin now in Chicago, whose books are rapidly appearing in English translations. Five of them, listed at the beginning of this review, are on my desk. They might be described as essays toward a grammar of the symbolism of religion. By "religion" I mean religion considered as a universal human cultural phenomenon, as distinct from "a" religion, which is a specific and exclusive institution, almost always claiming to result from a specific and exclusive revelation. "Religion" in this sense might be called a way of life that expresses a search for identification. As such, it does not need a personal God, for it may identify man simply with his own society through a symbol of solidarity, as in totemism or Communism. The religious tendency seeks the existential, usually some functioning institution that responds to faith and commands loyalty. In any period of crisis or uncertainty the need for some sort of identification becomes very strong, and a great variety of objects of it are proposed, all of them advertised with much the same formula: "we're in a bad state; this is what will help." But while the pitch, so to speak, is usually thrown into discursive language, the effective appeal is through symbolism and myth, hence all studies of "comparative religion" tend to become comparisons of mythology rather than doctrine.

The conception of a grammar of religious symbolism has haunted scholars for centuries, and has had an even greater fascination for poets. Poets in fact are so keen about it that they will use the most fantastic books purporting to provide one, as a glance into the background of Goethe, Victor Hugo and Yeats, to name three at random, will soon show. There are many reasons for this interest: the central one is that poetry, as distinct from discursive language, uses the language of identification, based as it is on the metaphor, which is a relation of identity. In Christianity many important doctrines, such as the divinity of Christ or the real presence or the Trinity, can only be expressed grammatically by metaphor. There is thus a strong natural alliance between the language of poetry (and the imaginative language

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of works of culture generally), and the aim of the religious impulse, which in the long run can find no other speech than that of the poetic symbol. Renaissance poets used Classical mythology as a counterpoint to Christianity, making use of mythological handbooks which tried to relate the two. Romantic poets used similar handbooks, and poets who came of age around 1900 used everything from elementary anthropology to Blavatskian theosophy. But of course the great landmark in such studies was *The Golden Bough,* ostensibly a work of anthropology, but actually a piece of Classical scholarship with anthropological illustrations. It was promptly seized on as a work of literary criticism, which it was: its influence on modern literature is familiar, but the reasons for it may be less so.

The Golden Bough suggested what Christian apologists back to the first century had been suggesting: that at the core of primitive religion, the world over, was a parody of the Christian sacrament. A divine king, regarded either as a god or as the chosen son of the tribe's god, is killed at the height of his vigor; his flesh is eaten, his blood drunk, and so his divinity passes into the tribe and unites them in one body. In an agricultural tribe his flesh and blood would be identified with the harvest and the vintage, the bread and the wine. It was not really necessary to Frazer's argument to assume that his grisly rite ever had anything more than a sporadic historical existence. Its real existence is as a symbolic key to a great number of actual rituals which express some aspect of it, ranging from cults of human sacrifice to Mayday games. In a way it was unfortunate that it should have been Frazer, with his naive Victorian evolutionism and his top-lofty attitude to primitive thinking, who got the tremendous intuition of this book. His escalator philosophy of progress, from magic through religion to science, made him think of his symbolic pattern as immemorially archaic, instead of something constantly latent in the human mind. For *The Golden Bough* is really a study of unconscious social symbolism as expressed in ritual, and hence it is closely linked, as Freud immediately recognized, to Freudian psychology, which studies unconscious individual symbolism as expressed in dream. On this point the differences between Freud and Jung are not particularly significant, and the Jungian interest in similar patterns is reflected in the Eranos papers. Mr. Eliade's books take this interest a step farther.

Frazer's book made great use of what Frazer called, using capitals, the Comparative Method. For many anthropologists his use of it was over-enthusiastic and premature, because they were trying to relate such phenomena as vegetation myths to the cultures that produced them, instead of comparing them with each other. That was another reason why *The Golden Bough's* main influence was in literature and comparative religion rather than anthropology. Mr. Eliade clearly feels that, his own interest being in comparative religion, it is possible to revert to nineteenth-century comparative methods now that anthro-

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pology and psychology have developed their own structures and are less in danger of being twisted out of shape by an alien interest. He says in his introduction to *The Sacred and the Profane:* "There is always the risk of falling back into the errors of the nineteenth century, believing with Tylor or Frazer that the reaction of the human mind to natural phenomena is uniform.... But the important thing for our purpose is to bring out the specific characteristics of the religious experience, rather than to show its numerous variations and the differences caused by history." In other words, he is going back to the method of Tylor and Frazer with slightly more cautiousness, and with the object of showing a uniformity in general religious symbolism which reappears as a unity in the symbolic structures of the higher religions, more particularly Christianity.

Patterns in Comparative Religion is a remarkable introduction to the grammar of comparative symbolism. It suggests that in fact there is such a thing as a universal natural theology, of the type that Tylor called animism. Eliade thinks of this animism, however, not as chronologically prior to all other religions, as Tylor did, but as latent in all religious structures and the key to most of their imagery. He begins with the sky-god, which, following Father Schmidt and Dumézil, he regards as a practically universal conception. This sky-god is regularly the supreme or original god, though in the course of time intermediate figures begin to occupy the foreground of mythology, and he becomes a *dieu fainéant* without a cult, only appealed to as a last and desperate resort. We then move on to the imaginative conceptions that have been constructed out of the different aspects of nature: solar and vegetation cycles, where Frazer's work is incorporated; symbolism of trees, stones and water; sacred places and sacred time. There is a particularly interesting chapter on "The Moon and its Mystique," which derives an extraordinary number of imaginative patterns from the moon, notably the three-day rhythm of death, disappearance and rebirth that turns up so often in religion.

At the heart of this animistic symbolism is the theme of death and rebirth, the theme that is studied in *The Golden Bough* in terms of social ritual, and in Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* and elsewhere in terms of individual dream. The divine king is magically identified with the powers of nature, hence his death and revival is identified with the passing of the natural cycle through darkness, cold and sterility to a new life. The king revives in two ways: within the tribe, making one body out of them, and by having his divinity transferred to a successor: the successor is thus not thought of as a different person, but as a continuation of the same power in a revitalized form. The Jungian quest is similar; the ego descends into the underworld of the unconscious, struggles with the powers of darkness and chaos it finds there, and returns as an "individual," with the same life revitalized. Eliade's other books deal chiefly with this central pattern of

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symbolism, and their central conception is that a renewal in time is normally thought of as a renewal of time.

In *Cosmos and History* Eliade works out a pattern often referred to in *Man and Time,* which I assume develops out of Gunkel's classic *Schöpfung und Chaos,* with some influence from Otto's *Idea of the Holy* and perhaps some from Kierkegaard's *Repetition.* According to this book, religion is normally characterized by a revolt against living in time. Life in time, with all its failures and errors, its frustrations and sins, its loose ends, unfulfilled purposes, and postponed decisions, with the inevitability of death and the hopelessness of salvaging much if anything from the temporal flux, is intolerable even to the secular imagination, to say nothing of the religious one, once the anesthetic of youth wears off. Hence the frequency of the feeling "from now on things are going to be different," the spasmodic resolutions, often made at the new year, to impose a consistent pattern of action on time. Religion meets this feeling by postulating a mythical period, usually before time began, when the essential patterns of significant action known as rituals were laid down by divine command. Hence overriding one's confused existence in time is a sacramental pattern of regularly repeated rituals or significant acts, carried out exactly in accordance with instructions issued "once upon a time," or *in illo tempore* as Eliade says. These rituals follow the cycle of nature and incorporate its symbolism, at the centre of which is the scapegoat, the symbol of the old life now to be banished forever. As religion develops, primordial time often develops a corresponding final time, an apocalypse or Last Judgment when time regains its original timelessness. In the higher religions this sacramental pattern tends to absorb increasingly the secular life. Of the higher religions, Judaism and Christianity at least have an intermediate revelation placed squarely in the middle of time itself. In Christianity the historical revolt against time was made by the Incarnation, and is continued in the sacramental life of the Church. In the latter the sense of history as a nightmare from which one keeps trying to awake, as Stephen says in *Ulysses,* is finally annihilated. The great contemporary rival of Christianity, Communism, bases most of its imaginative appeal on its promise to abolish history, or the record of class struggles, and lead mankind into a superhistorical era. In our ordinary experience of time we are dragged from a past that no longer exists toward a future that does not yet exist through a present that never quite exists. The hope of the religious impulse, whether it is committed to a God or not, is to live in a real present, a pure duration that is difficult to characterize except through some kind of paradox.

Birth and Rebirth studies the symbolism of the *rite de passage* as we find it in various rituals and religious doctrines, with particular emphasis on the aboriginal Australian variety. The ritual of initiation usually takes the form of a mimic death and resurrection, and the

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death is usually symbolized as being swallowed by a monster, or, less concretely, taken down into a dark and labyrinthine world, exposed to threatening beings, and the like. From this the initiate returns as newly born, an infant in relation to another stage of being. The ritual death has about it the symbolism of a reduction to a world of chaos, where ordinary social life disappears into what often takes the form of a carnival or period of sexual license. In the higher religions the same pattern reappears as baptism (descent to the world of water) or as a death to the world which brings a renewed life in a pure present, where we no longer take thought for the morrow.

Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, a work of formidable scholarship, pursues the same symbolism into one of the higher religions, the Indian experimental mysticism known as yoga. In yoga, and in Hindu thought generally, the anxiety engendered by living in time is called karma, thought of as a process of causality that follows one through death to endless rebirths. The discipline of yoga requires, first, that the physical world should be reduced to chaos (maya or illusion), and that the initiate should die to the world by regarding not only his body but his ordinary consciousness as part of that chaos. The process of dying to the world is carried to extraordinary lengths, and includes suspension of breath and immobilization of both body and mind. Then, through an equally thoroughgoing discipline of meditation, a new and timeless consciousness is established which is a pure present *(jivan-mukta),* and unites one to reality or nirvana. The word "freedom" in Mr. Eliade's title reflects the yoga doctrine that freedom and immortality are really the same conception, and can be found only in surmounting the world of time.

It is obvious that such studies as Eliade's have an immediate relevance to literary criticism—so immediate that a critic who ignores this kind of work altogether is risking his competence in his own field. It is impossible to deal adequately with contemporary literature without some understanding of cyclical and initiatory symbolism. The sense that life in time is imaginatively intolerable is the basis of literary existentialism, and the free act, especially the act that asserts its freedom in the face of death, has the same quality of triumph over time in existentialist literature that the initiatory rite has in the Australian bush. The initiatory rite and its symbolism recurs in every work of fiction that leaves the hero wiser than it finds him, or endeavors to leave the reader so. We soon realize too that on this point there is no difference between contemporary and traditional literature, as such symbolic patterns have been organizing literature from the beginning. The symbolism of descent into chaos is as prominent in *King Lear* as in *The Waste Land,* and sea-monsters were swallowing maidens for thousands of years before Dylan Thomas's long-legged bait.

The study of yoga recalls the growth in popularity of Oriental themes in modern literature. This growth, unlike the development of

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Classical mythology centuries earlier, seems less a matter of supplementing Christian symbolism with another line of imagery than of replacing it with analogous patterns. The reason for the replacement is apparently to avoid misleading associations. The statement "the practice of the dharma releases one from the law of karma and leads to nirvana" does not differ greatly in substance from the statement "if you're good you'll stop being bad and will get into a better state of mind," but it gives less of a feeling of being sent back to Sunday School. Still, there are some genuine affinities between the sense of spiritual autonomy in Hinduism and Buddhism and certain types of Western individualism: one feels the appropriateness of Thoreau's reading the Bhagavadgita on the Merrimac river. The techniques of Zen Buddhism, aimed at immobilizing the mind through paradox, have much in common with yoga (one would like to see Mr. Eliade do a parallel study of Zen), and again one feels that the use made of Zen in Kerouac and others has a real point, often ignored or misunderstood. The "beat" writers are trying to identify the genuine proletariat, the body of those who are excluded from the benefits of society and have sense enough to realize it. For such a proletariat the road to freedom is not through organizing a revolution to seize power from the squares and become squares in their turn, but through breaking the current of social energy by drifting, bumming, playing jazz, taking dope, or what not, and entering the world of the pure present through the break. The beat philosophy may be wrong—that is, it may be crazy itself instead of merely making use of craziness—but its symbolism is a contemporary cultural force to be reckoned with.

Mr. Eliade has little interest in literature, and it is perhaps unreasonable to expect him to extend his already enormous erudition to include it. We are merely told in *Cosmos and History* that Eliot and Joyce use the myth of repetition, and in *Birth and Rebirth* that Eliot and Joyce use initiatory patterns of symbolism. But in *The Sacred and the Profane* it seems clear that the absence of literary parallels is not a simple omission but a deliberate exclusion. Here Mr. Eliade reverts to his theme of the sacred universe, as expressed by the primitive mind, and applied to the sacred object, the tree or stone surrounded with a sense of the numinous; the sacred place, whether an enclosed "holy ground" or a temple or city situated at the centre of the world midway between heaven and hell; sacred or mythical time, of the sacramental kind already discussed, and the sanctification of life that results from all this. The sacred mind is contrasted with the profane mind of enlightened, conscious, history-absorbed modern man, who simply doesn't see any sacred significance in anything anywhere, who feels "he will not be truly free until he has killed the last god," and whose literature is full of "camouflaged" myths designed only to "kill time."

The Sacred and the Profane is not exactly a preachy book, but it comes the nearest of the five to setting out the author's own views, and

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it displays the same kind of almost frightening insensitivity to culture that we noted at the beginning as characteristic of preachers of anxiety. For surely the contrast is not simply between the sacred and the profane, but also between the projected and the contained. Sacred trees and stones, cities at the navel of the earth, a primordial time of the gods, are all projections, and it would be the silliest kind of self-hypnosis to try to talk ourselves into accepting such projections again. The difference between superstition and religion, which seems to disappear from Mr. Eliade's argument, is that in religion such feelings are transferred from the physical to the spiritual world, from outer time and space to inner experience. The development of culture, especially literature, which cuts off the projecting of the imagination by appealing directly to the sense of imaginative coherence itself, is of immense help in the development of a higher religion, and is probably essential to it. It is not merely that science has destroyed the sense of sacredness in time and space, but that poetry has recovered it for the world to which it really belongs. As for killing the last god, any god who can die is better dead, and I see no reason for thinking that myths are more camouflaged in modern movies than they are in Old Testament history. Mr. Eliade is very far from being a Jungian disciple, but he shows a similar desire to over-simplify our present situation into a dilemma, and a similar impatience with the effort of literature to turn away from crisis and commitment and devote itself to purifying the imaginative dialect of the tribe. It is a curious irony, revealing much about the general dither of our time, that such work as his should be primarily of literary importance.

JOSEPH BENNETT

Two Americans, A Brahmin, and the Bourgeoisie[1]

JAMES MERRILL'S SECOND VOLUME sharpens and clarifies the poetic gift which was so discernible in his original collection eight years ago. There is a refinement of the vision, a tightening of the imagery, a more spare and grasped elucidation of the ideas, which are more stark, and which show a turning away from the sensuousness and impressionism which graced his earlier work. The poet is more serious, and less

[1] THE COUNTRY OF A THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE, by *James Merrill*. Knopf. $3.95. OF THE FESTIVITY, by *William Dickey*. Yale University Press. $3.50. LIFE STUDIES, by *Robert Lowell*. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $3.50. COLLECTED POEMS, by *John Betjeman*. Houghton Mifflin. $4.00.

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delightful; the result is a move toward maturity. Poets develop, their expressions change; this talent, so charming in its earlier manifestations, now shows a grimmer and more earnest tone; more powerful, less ingratiating. But in the development of a talent as sure, as honest and as unhurried as this one, this is progress.

The title poem shows this at once: sober, restrained, "calm," yet frightening; a sense of tragedy shrewdly put over in twenty short and subtle lines:

> *Would coax you still back from that starry land*
> *Under the world, which no one sees*
> *Without a death, its finish and sharp weight*
> *Flashing in his own hand.*

The immediacy of the vision is remarkable; Mr. Merrill is dealing with lethal powers and dealing with them heavily and roundly, as they should be dealt; it all comes over, comes out, with a thud, the heavy thud of death; and this is what is wanted here, technically; so that what we have, once again, is a rounded aesthetic construct; a poem, in short. It is good, and rare.

Mr. Merrill, scrupulously avoiding the ordinary, now has a drier tone, discriminating and exact:

> *You nod assent. Autumn turns windy, huge,*
> *A clear vase of dry leaves vibrating on and on.*
> *We sit, watching. When I next speak*
> *Love buries itself in me, up to the hilt.*

Somber, meditative, resigned and pure—"In a strange city's clear grave acids"—"letters moulting out of memory, lost/ Seasons of the breast of a snowbird . . . ." The muted quality, a diffused and separated, analyzed romanticism, comes back at the reader from this uncanny sensibility, a paralysis of emotional suspension . . . . "Orchards, we linger here because/ Women we love stand propped in your green prisons. . . ."

The Charioteer of Delphi, Midas, the Sphinx—subjects for poems; and a curious *tour de force,* "A Narrow Escape". This exercise in irony and reversed expectations, brittle and "conversationalist" in tone, deals with the underside of clichés and conventional word clusters; it is an exercise in language; a foray into the realm where words associate themselves on ideational lines. Amusing, brilliant, experimental; it seems to me superbly brought off, a thoroughgoing success in a difficult, unconventional, and individual genre. It alone is worth the price of admission to the volume. There is the precious Jamesian overcast to the verbiage, proving the wicked depth and subtlety of the ironies involved. When such a contorted and peculiar flower can be made of language, of merely exploring the possibilities of the medium, it is to be regretted that poets do not more often see merely in the intricacies of their craft the possibilities of technical explosions such as this.

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The "Salome" poem gives us a St. John nicely liquefacted and preserved, an enameling this rather noisy and demonstrative creature has needed for some time; he is in "gliding gardens", he spills "on the naked/Stranger a pure and tripled mitre." He broods "on the sacrament/ Of flowing streams." But after the subtle specialties of Part I, the poet tacks on two rather irrelevant, and unconvincing 'examples from modern life.'

"Amsterdam", "Laboratory Poem"—good poems—in the first, the sensuousness of Merrill's earlier style, and the irony, delayed, familiar, of his later—a compound of impressionism and ruefulness, bittersweet, delicate and provocative. The second, the dissection of a turtle; cold, bediamonded, detached; quite sharp; much bitterness.

Later in style, "The Locusts," shows that firmness and ease of pace, the sober colors and unstrained exactitude which seem Mr. Merrill's current objectives. Quietness, and the startling image to relieve the brown drabness; the moving line, relaxed; and the fine, inevitable satisfying conclusion. Gray-brown and purposeful.

Somber too, but more delicate, is the dedication poem which movingly concludes the book, the memory of a death; and then there are Mr. Merrill's "Orfeo" and his "Marsyas". Perhaps the best poem in the book, the "Orfeo" is a curiously brushed and delicately screened evocation of the underworld as a gilt rococo theatre, where the souls wield "trembling fans", where Orfeo unwinds "His opulence of pain." Weird, peculiar, uncanny, economical, brief, soft-etched, deft and stiletto-like, it catches the breath and the heart. There is first-rate craftsmanship; there is the myth made real; actualized; lived and not described. Thus the myth has actual personages; it is something moving, and of course, sad.

"Marsyas" on the other hand is more brilliant and forceful, more damaging and deliberate, less etched and more driven:

> *Then crash! my cup upset.*
> *Of twenty upward looks mine only met*
> *His, that gold archaic lion's look . . .*

Apollo's golden wind *inflicts* "so much music on the lyre/ That no one could have told you what he sang."

No, the brushwork of "Orfeo" is better than the heavy line of "Marsyas". Placed conveniently side by side, the poems show you what Mr. Merrill has achieved, where he has come from. Who can forget, of Eurydice:

> *Among the shadows of a box*
> *That bear, that bear outspread upon*
> *The plush worn bare, a white peacock's*
> *Gem'd at the dusk on a dissolving lawn,*
>
> *[illegible]*
> *[illegible]*

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William Dickey has a soberness and orderliness of statement that is appealing. A less personal poet than James Merrill, and a less noticeable one, he nevertheless, in his own way, provides a type of reasoned, considered public statement, which, though without pyrotechnic, has attraction. In some poems there is a tendency to drabness, and over others, dullness hovers, ready to break in. Yet he hits pretty well when he does hit, in his own careful manner; less of a chance-taker, less individual, less daring than Mr. Merrill.

Mr. Dickey's title poem shows a calm, clear control, a serenity of attitude that communicates itself through nobility of language.

In the "Andantino" poem, the effect is more subtle, the means more graduated, the impressions more dissolved:

Beyond the railroad trestle is the river.
That is the middle voice. The one still farther
Is in the town, shining out toward the water.
The middle voice we hear. The other voices,
As of impatient lovers who still wander,
Are muted by our being here together.

I like this gracefulness and this ease.

There are well-perceived specifications in such poems as "Twenty Years Gone", "Lesson of the Master", "One Incident of Many"; there is Alice with her "breastworks of a Minoan jade"; there is an elegant Duc de Berri; and an interesting Easter Island poem. In the end one wants to reproach Mr. Dickey not with lack of taste but with lack of adventurousness. He is too cautious; he doesn't take enough chances. He is walking with each eye on an opposite wall.

Yet in his Brunetto Latini poem—

Now deeply drunk, always where you have found him
In any place before, he will lie dead,
Thin hair spilt in a yellow pool around him
Beneath the night light, his arms under his head:
His face jerks with the quickening dream that holds him.

—there is quite strong feeling, emotional depth. Unquestionably the best poem in the book, the certainty of Mr. Dickey's style is here combined with a close and rendered account of suffering; the harrowing and haunting quality of the vision clears itself finally into an exact and satisfying epiphany. This is very fine work.

Robert Lowell, in his volume, also does an exercise on the Brunetto Latini Canto, quoting the same lines from *Inferno XV* as does Mr. Dickey. Mr. Lowell's rendition suffers considerably (especially in relation to Mr. Dickey's fine poem) from its off-hand, journalistic technique. It is carelessly written, and indifferent. The indifference is in the attitude of the poet to his materials. The casualness is not deliberate, contrived, the cunning craft of the artist, but lack of interest. The poem in

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question is a memoir of Santayana, and indeed the whole volume is a collection of lazily recollected and somewhat snobbish memoirs, principally of the poet's own wealthy and aristocratic family. Only occasionally does a glint of the old Lowell show through, as at one point in the Santayana poem,

> *that worn arena, where the whirling sand*
> *and broken-hearted lions lick your hand*
> *refined by bile as yellow as a lump of gold.*

This book does little to add to Lowell's standing as a poet. Lazy and anecdotal, it is more suited as an appendix to some snobbish society magazine, to *Town and Country* or *Harper's Bazaar,* rather than as purposeful work. Fortunately for those of us who have been moved by what Mr. Lowell has done in the past, one cannot take the book very seriously; and the rare, maverick rebellious genius which gave us the extraordinary *tours de force* and startling technical triumphs of *Land of Unlikeness* and *Lord Weary's Castle* is merely sleeping. *Hic dormit bonus Homerus.*

The prose autobiographical section of the book is the chief offender. Need we recapitulate the grandparents, the aunts, uncles, parents, cousins, all wealthy, all aristocratic, who romp through town mansions, country estates, seaside villas—Beacon Hill, Beverly Farms, Middleboro—*The Proper Bostonians, The Late George Apley*—a mixture of Cleveland Amory and John Marquand: we visit an insane asylum for Porcellian members; our jail in New York reminds us of the soccer court at St. Mark's School; we learn the intricacies of the *pre*-St. Mark's schools; and we seem constantly on the verge of being provided with a Harvard club-ladder. Such remarkable Lowells as Amy and James Russell hover benignly or malevolently in the background to remind us that the family is literary as well; but others, such as A. Lawrence and Ralph, are soft-pedaled (Cotuit and Nahant branches). The whole is topped off with the whipped cream of heirloom furniture and plate, chauffeurs, choremen, Admirals, Pierce-Arrows, hermit heiresses etc. I am relieved to report, however, that we enter the precincts neither of Myopia nor the Somerset Club.

This disappointing book detracts from but cannot destroy Mr. Lowell's unique, deserved, and very high reputation. One looks forward with a mixture of hope and anxiety to his next volume.

John Betjeman is the most "English" of poets, the "southerner" par excellence (as distinguished from the cold and fish-eyed barbarian "from north of Trent"), the "university" man. He is above all else the poet of the Middle Class. Sentiment, poignancy, Victorian settings, the slow ebb and flow of autumnal feeling in the suburbs—this is his world. Electric trains thread through the vast maze of villages and networks of railway lines around London, bringing lonely spinster typists from summer cottages in Tunbridge Wells to winter flats in Onslow gar-

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dens with "precarious bathrooms / Jutting out from upper floors." Little boys in Victorian suburbs wonderingly stretch their fingers out at life; the joys and pathos of wedded commuters and the transience of their lives are mirrored in the metropolitan railway terminus at Baker Street Station, with its Victorian electrolier. And in the sentence of doom which accompanies an X-ray from a fashionable physician the cold wind of tragedy strikes heartbreakingly at a pathetic, aging suburban couple, lost helplessly in the cold metropolis, heading for the suburban station and the suburban train, the only central point of reference they know. Strongly Dickensian, and moving, this pathos, an extension of Victorian bourgeois art into the second half of the twentieth century.

But why is this work, for all its obviousness, so unquestionably moving, perhaps more so than any being written today? The permanently autumnal cast, the Victorian architecture and accessories, the feeling of constant sunset—the heavy nostalgia for the solid, the Edwardian, the red brick, the horsehair and the pre-1914—the love and reverence for a vanished order—a rich, oak-stained, comfortable, reactionary, bourgeois frame of mind—

> *. . . behold the Village School,*
> *Its gable rising out of ivy thick*
> *Shows "Eighteen-Sixty" worked in coloured brick. . . .*
> *The villagers were ruled by masters three—*
> *Squire, parson, schoolmaster . . .*

It is all so quaint, so harking-back; so much of autumnal fires, so very, very moving. Perhaps because we live in an age of the suburbs, and the Victorian and Edwardian suburbs of London were the first suburbs anywhere, and the generation of Betjeman's parents the first commuters—we feel the fragility and insubstantiality, the unreal quality of modern life in these first communities of purely artificial country living, without any relation to the land around them, with mere tenant-ownership, drawing their sustenance from far away, from the heart of the City of London, whence they are linked by electric trains like arteries, supplying them with food and blood. Dickens' families of business-people have moved outside of London. And the despair of being alone in the great city, the electroliers of the station, the doom-sentence of the X-ray physician—

> *And all that day in murky London Wall*
> *The thought of RUISLIP kept him warm inside . . .*
> *While she, in arc-lit Oxford Street adrift,*
> *Soared through the sales by safe hydraulic lift.*
>
> *Early Electric! Maybe even here*
> *They met that evening at six-fifteen*
> *Beneath the hearts of this electrolier*

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And caught the first non-stop to WILLESDEN GREEN,
Then out and on, through rural RAYNER'S LANE
To autumn-scented Middlesex again.

Cancer has killed him, Heart is killing her.
The trees are down. An Odeon flashes fire
Where stood their villa by the murmuring fir
When "they would for their children's good conspire."
Of all their loves and hopes on hurrying feet
Thou art the worn memorial, Baker Street.

It is mercantile, middle-class, and pathos, pathos without let-up, and yet profoundly moving—the same materials worked over and over again and yet ringing true each time.

In keeping with the middle-class tradition, the University connections and Arcadian "Views of the Colleges" are played up in their most heavily nostalgic form—again, very "southern" (as opposed to "north of Trent") and very bourgeois, very Victorian. The introduction is by an Earl, but the Earl is the son of the famous self-made lawyer, F. E. Smith; there is an Elegy to a genuine Marquess, in the full-blown 1920s style (the Bullingdon—Sports-Bugatti from Thame—man in Magdalen—Lord Sebastian—the Marquess is someone we knew at Oxford; nothing could be less aristocratic and more middle-class (witness Waugh's lifelong middle-class gape at the aristocracy, seen through Arcadian Oxford eyes). And nothing could be more moving, I repeat. Mr. Betjeman's materials are very simple, and his objectives very apparent. His Marquesses and Earls come through much better than Mr. Lowell's more fully authenticated Winslows and Lowells.

He owes much to Laforgue; his sense of the bathos and the touching absurdity of modern life:

"Plimsolls, plimsolls in the summer,
Oh goloshes in the wet!" . . .

He gives his Ovaltine a stir
And nibbles at a "petit beurre" . . .

Oh! Fuller's angel-cake, Roberston's marmalade,
Liberty lampshade, come, shine on us all . . . .

His Oxford and his Bullingdon are richer and more meaningful than Mr. Lowell's St. Mark's and his Porcellian. Betjeman is also in debt to Baudelaire, as witness his "On a Portrait of a Deaf Man", which shows the benefit of a close reading of "Une Charogne".

Why is this poetry so good? These opinions, so conservative, so old-fashioned, so passionately reactionary, why do they give us comfort and reassurance?

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DEATH OF KING GEORGE V

"New King arrives in his capital by air . . ."
—Daily Newspaper.

Spirits of well-shot woodcock, partridge, snipe
Flutter and bear him up the Norfolk sky:
In that red house in a red mahogany book-case
The stamp collection waits with mounts long dry.

The big blue eyes are shut which saw wrong clothing
And favourite fields and coverts from a horse;
Old men in country houses hear clocks ticking
Over thick carpets with a deadened force;

Old men who never cheated, never doubted,
Communicated monthly, sit and stare
At the new suburb stretched beyond the run-way
Where a young man lands hatless from the air.

This most excellent poem displays Betjeman at his best: nostalgia, pathos, reverence for the established order, awe at the aristocracy and the crown—all the Tory emotion of the true conservative—the heart of a squire and a landowner beating in a middle-class breast. And the setting, Sandringham, so incongruous for poetry, and yet so typical of Betjeman that he would find it there, in the most commonplace home of the most commonplace of dynasties. And it is precisely the middle-class bonhomie and rectitude, family-centred, of Victoria and her Wettin descendants that is at the centre of the poet's bourgeois sentiment for the crown.

This is why Betjeman is so good. True poet of the Middle Class and son of commuting suburbia, he beats with the heart of a Tory—the suburban status so dearly won by the middle class before 1914 now must be crystallized and sentimentalized into the traditional British social structure.

And since, in all industrialized Western nations, we are rapidly becoming countries of the middle class, he has found a valid note. As the middle class we represent the principle of change and we have come into being through change. Our suburban and semi-detached villas have replaced the castles of the aristocracy and the forests and farms of woodman and peasant. Yet in the act of tearing down the old, we exhibit reverence for the past and wish ourselves part of that rural Tory Arcadia of pastor, squire and schoolmaster which we have destroyed; we resent the further social changes, the Town Planner "from north of Trent", which our own uprising has set in motion.

Let us hail Betjeman, poet of the pathos of the Middle Class; poet of nostalgia for the world of Edwardian childhood in suburbia; poet of the Victorian mercantile liberals; of electric commuter trains; of

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autumn, of sunset; poet of death, middle-class death; poet of fear of death; of the retired Civil Servant; of the flannelled lawn-tennised middle-class seaside holiday ("mid-Victoria's Italy—Torquay"); poet of the lonely typist and the rector's widow; poet of middle-class religious doubt, ringing in the good old-fashioned Tennysonian questions:

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all . . .

He is the Victorian poser of such old-fogey dilemmas as the immortality of the soul and whether

The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

He is the poet of poignancy, pathos, nostalgic and simple ideas; Betjeman is the successor, ideologically, of Tennyson; it is as if "Locksley Hall" were only freshly written, and we were moving on, somewhat simple-minded, from the questions posed by the Sage of the Isle of Wight, the Only Poet in the Peerage.

Turn back the leaves of sixty years and turn back to more simple things and more simple minds; you will find Betjeman one of the most moving poets now writing. He glows the dull-red, cherry glow of authenticity; he does not scintillate, he does not stun; but he convinces. And he arouses true pathos, without a trace of the maudlin. Sentimental, like all bourgeois poets, he is yet restrained; we are spared the copious tears of bourgeois art. In him the Middle Class of the twentieth century has found its Poet, and he (through slow of mind) is not of Middle Mind. He has chosen the middle-class psyche and the middle-class pathos; they are peculiarly his own, throughout the prosperous western world, in this second half of the twentieth century.

Indeed, the parallels with Tennyson are so striking in line and idea and cast of mind that of England's two great bourgeois poets, Tennyson and Betjeman, it is hard to distinguish the verses.

Who wrote:

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

They're both very good.

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JOHN THOMPSON

American Dreamers[1]

> *The state of civilization in America at the present day offers a good opportunity for studying this injurious effect of civilization which we have reason to dread.*
>
> —Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. 1930.

Is America any better than it used to be? If, I mean, this year were the year 1909, 1859, 1809, would we—and my meaning here is so simple you may want to call it simple-minded—would we, you or I, be happier or not. . . . That is all I mean. And the answer is, Oh, we don't know.

We could suppose that in the land of Currier and Ives we'd have had, given the kind of fate we have been given, you and I, today, being educated more or less, reading, more or less, as we are, an advanced and respectable literary journal, being, that is, more or less where we are in the world, a better house: some congruence of noble oblongs, white, wooden, green-shuttered, under an unblighted elm or two, and we'd be reading this journal in our study lined not with Anchor books in slats but with yards and yards, maroon yards and dark green yards, of the standard authors. Our children, we can fairly suppose, would have gone to bed, after a due pause in the day's occupations, quaint with ringlets and courtesy; by our double lamp we'd be thinking about culture in America. So probably, for us, for the likes of you and me, the great material civilization has pretty steadily gone backwards. But that's not the part of culture we like to bother about anyway. Our own house, great or squalid, isn't for people like us the bigger part of American culture, and we know it would always have taken more than green shutters and cheap maids to make us happy, just as we suppose it now takes more than electronic can-openers.

We might wonder about work, then. But for our kind that hasn't changed so very much. For the others it's easier now and probably more unbearable. No, they had less control over nature than we have, but nature was their bounty; for beauty, cleanliness and order, they had again nature itself or the older villages they could go to if they couldn't stand slab sides and mud; then there is religion, philosophical speculation, ideals of individual perfection. Did they have these! But do we have them, and if not what substitutes. (I'm using Freud's list of the items that constitute culture, "the sum of achievements and institutions which differentiate our lives from those of our animal forebears. . . .") Finally, social relations: man as neighbor, source of help, sexual object, member of family or state. Yes, rotten for them, rotten for us, and much said and to say about it.

[1] THE ECCENTRIC DESIGN: Form in the Classic American Novel, by *Marius Bewley*. Columbia University Press. $4.00.

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From the beginning it has been recognized that the American lived with the tension of extremes, with ideas "either extremely minute and clear or extremely general and vague"; with loneliness in a vast country; with the light and darkness of Manichean Puritanism; with Highbrow and Lowbrow; and as Tocqueville said, "What lies between is a void." The catalogue of deprivations has been repeated again and again: no manners, no ruins, no legends, no belted granges, no moated earls. They were artists mostly who were complaining, and it was their practice as artists that they said was suffering. They were wrong. They suffered as men, and as artists some of them at least did what Van Wyck Brooks said could be done, not knowing that it had been. It really was, it really is, a poor enough world. "But everyone knows that the sketchiest, the most immature, the most trivial society is just as susceptible as any other of the most profound artistic reconstruction; all that is required is an artist capable of penetrating beneath it." We have learned now that these extremes they suffered from and we suffer from mark the true form of any culture; "the form of its existence is struggle," as Trilling puts it; and we have learned that in registering the particularly cruel struggle of our extremes our writers produced, if not the English novel again as everyone thought they should, then the American novel, the "romance-novel" as Richard Chase calls it. About this kind of novel and its relation to the American experience we now have a great deal of excellent and most pointed discussion. This may be the best way we have of talking about our fate, of asking how unhappy we are and why.

Marius Bewley's second book on the American novel, *The Eccentric Design,* is one of these excellent discussions. The first thing to say about it is that Bewley has a fine literary sensibility that takes him accurately to the center of every book he discusses. And the books he discusses are the center, almost always, of the author's works. He has read everything, and from this everything he takes the one scene that matters most and then tells us with great patience and clarity and established relations on many sides all that it means to him.

His authors are among those we prize most and discuss most today: Hawthorne, Melville, James, Fitzgerald and then, Cooper. "Cooper," he says, "has been consistently underestimated as an artist," and the claims Bewley makes for him are interesting and impressive and nearly convincing. Cooper's *Deerslayer* and *Prairie* he analyzes in their moral dimensions and in their symbolism. He takes of Hawthorne, among other things, "The Hollow of the Three Hills," which contains Hawthorne's central landscape; the veils; the large moral problems; for Hawthorne, I believe, he claims too little, but he says, again, interesting and impressive things. He takes from *Moby Dick* the great circle of the sperm-whales, "The Grand Armada." In James he takes the little scene from *Madame de Mauves* where Bernard sees a young couple at a French inn, the young couple who are "the best commentary in James's fictions on what Strether meant by his rather tired recom-

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mendation of life." With his constant sensitivity to tone and imaginative effect, Bewley reads these scenes, and I should think anyone would be glad to profit by this intelligence.

I have not even mentioned the intellectual scheme of the book. I'm not much in sympathy with it; the brief summary or rebuttal of a review would be unfair. It is based on a serious, responsible, and documented view of the American tensions, a divergence of ideals, those of Adams and those of Hamilton. It is clear that there is truth in it; if other readers feel, as I do, that not enough is in it, it will be partly because Bewley's subtle and conscientious readings have helped bring many other truths to our minds.

Sometimes, Bewley's choice of scene and the light he shows it in make me feel that certain of these other truths must also be in his mind, and that he is being tactful with us. If that is so, I would not find it dishonorable. For in the study of literature we have come to a very peculiar position. We seem to stand shuffling reluctantly on the brink of understanding literature so well that it won't work for us any more. Here as in everything else, America has been prophetic. We see how our novels are romances, are not "realistic," even when our writers tried or thought they ought to try realism. The surface texture of social and psychological cause-and-effect is stretched, torn, or shattered completely by the surges of fantasy, by what we recognize as the elements of dream. We have even come to accept this, and as Chase energetically does, to claim it for our own and applaud it. But why does symbol and fantasy break through so notably here?

That the imagery and plot of romance are basically sexual I think few would seriously deny. Yet this alone is not much of an answer. Let me take a small example. In relating to a moral structure the magic landscape in "The Hollow of the Three Hills," Bewley is perfectly justified in claiming that what is meant by the scene is the woman's stricken heart rather than her stricken organs of generation, but can this identification lead to anything but a moral decision? Two women meet here, one fair but troubled, the other ancient and ill-favoured, a witch; the first has "offended against her marriage vow," and left her parents sorrowing, her husband in a madhouse, her child dead.

> . . . Three little hills stood near each other, and down in the midst of them sunk a hollow basin, almost mathematically circular, two or three hundred feet in breadth, and of such depth that a stately cedar might but just be visible above the sides. Dwarf pines were numerous upon the hills, and partly fringed the outer verge of the intermediate hollow, within which there was nothing but the brown grass of October, and here and there a tree trunk that had fallen long ago and lay mouldering with no green successor from its roots. One of these masses of decaying wood, formerly a majestic oak, rested close beside a pool of green and sluggish water at the bottom of the basin. Such scenes as this (so grey tradition tells us) were once the resort

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> of the Power of evil and his plighted subjects; and here, at midnight or on the dim verge of evening, they were said to stand round the mantling pool, disturbing its putrid waters in the performance of an impious baptismal rite. The chill beauty of an autumnal sunset was now gilding the three hill-tops, whence a paler tint stole down their sides into the hollow.

Bewley wants to say that the lady's tragedy is social and moral: having sinned, she is "no longer capable of possessing or communicating with human reality." Her relation to parents, husband, and child is impossible since she sinned. It is an early, bare, and violent parable of *The Scarlet Letter*. Now, there is truth in this, but not enough. Hawthorne is greater than this, even in this little story. If the lady's heart is at question, there is no inherent opposition between her and parent, husband, child; the issue is indeed moral; someone is right and someone is wrong. And it is not exactly tragedy. If the ruined hollow is not her "heart" but her vagina, then the opposition is necessary and the result tragic. She is fated by being a human in a limiting society to be damaged in her sex and to show this damage in a way that drives men mad; and at the same time, quite beyond morality, she must exist in relation to society if she is to live at all. For society, culture, civilization, is our necessary condition, and it exists on the toll its members pay in sexual energy. In just this way, Hawthorne was forever telling the truth to people who wouldn't understand him, because they thought they should be able to see where he was putting "Right" and where "Wrong." He sat one day on a hill with the aspirant Howells, come to him with a note from Lowell. "I would almost have foregone meeting the weird genius," Howells wrote, "only to have kept that letter, for it said certain infinitely precious things of me with such a sweetness, such a grace. . . ."

> With the abrupt transition of his talk throughout, he began somehow to speak of women, and said he had never seen a woman whom he thought quite beautiful. In the same way he spoke of the New England temperament, and suggested that the apparent coldness in it was also real, and that the suppression of emotion for generations would extinguish it at last. Then he questioned me as to my knowledge of Concord. . . .

The marvelous balance and rightness of *The Scarlet Letter* is based on a fact that our critics often seem more concerned to obscure than to extend, explain, connect. "Two aspects of the will," we read, and "the tension between solitude and society." Yes, but its title truly is *The Scarlet Letter,* and it truly is about sex: about what happens to our sex in the condition of American culture. It had to be romance because there is no way for realism to tell the truth here.

In *Deerslayer*, Cooper's old Natty Bumppo is reborn young, pure, and immortal. That the realistic surface is distorted by the dream-imagery

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was found ridiculous by Mark Twain, as indeed it is unless we admit that this is a dream, that Deerslayer, in the most absurd and yet lovely dream ceremonies, re-enters the womb of the lake, is born again as a man-killer, given possession, in the form of a rifle, of the phallus that he so carefully declines to use. Is it not the felt presence of these elements behind the story, controlling its tone and its events, that gives the novel its beauty and its relevance, its perfect presentation of one solution to the dilemma of civilization? And gives, too, the basis of Cooper's ludicrous priggishness. The social and moral consequences of this imaginary solution start from and are limited by the fact that man finds himself in a society that must draw on sexual energy for its coherence, and to this coherence each member must make his sacrifice. The action of *Deerslayer* shows how Cooper, as if in a dream, could evade this.

Because it has been America that from its beginning required the most extreme and unalloyed civilization of its members—the need was immediate, even desperate, if this raw and scattered society was to live—the extreme tension showed in art first in America, and in the characteristic modern literary form, the novel. The novel became, under these pressures, the romance-novel, a poetry of the instincts under restraint. Now all Europe has it too.

So we have found the old romances, we have understood them better than our forefathers did, and this is because we have needed them more. Would we have been happier, you and I, in 1859, in 1809. . . . We think we are free of the high Puritanism of the old villages and the low slash and greed of the frontier, and that in this freedom we may be happier. In many ways our country is responsible now to what the few of us call "culture," as it is to our brothers on all the globe; these movements we can only welcome and seek to extend. But we can see that the extension costs something. The great burgeoning middle class that our sociologists keep telling us about, the prosperous crowd, lives together like one family which anyone can join if he wears the right costume. Its strength is its denial of all that the romances tell us; this society is held paralyzed by the energy flowing between the two poles our romances have described for us, and it denies that either of them exists, the instincts of self or the high demands of civilization. Here there is no father and no child; a thousand little relics of ceremony that might serve to help us admire men, become men, and endure being men have been ironed out of these lives. Boys wear long pants now over their diapers. The spokesmen of this society hate serious intellectuals and serious artists with a bitterness that few other societies have been able to maintain. Serious art and serious thought make a desperate threat to them, because the society lives partly by denial of the fight between men and the love between women and men, and lives mostly by denial that this condition of humanity is necessarily tragic, that civilization itself is a contradiction in terms and cannot make us happy. And by denying this, they make it impossible to seek such remedies as we might be able to invent.

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We have discovered for our study, then, the romancers of our past and of our present, Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, James, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner. . . . We no longer apologize for them. We no longer wish they had found more comfortable things to write about, or wish they had been more comfortable men. Still we do not honor enough their heroism. With a courage we should be unable to imagine if they hadn't done it, they forced themselves to stand in the cross-current and to register, without calling one shock Right and the other Wrong, the energy that had given them birth and that was killing them. All America was against them. We still have to pretend not to know what is meant in Hawthorne's tale of a passionate love and dread of the vagina, or in Melville's saga of a fearful search, as crazy and hopeless as any of those of Hemingway, for the biggest penis in the world: Melville, whom we call a failure because after this effort he retired to his customs job and his brownstone and was then for years, as unknown as Emily Dickinson, one of the very few real poets in his language. . . .

But now, having found the romances, we may be at the point where we cannot use them, where they won't work any more in the lovely old unconscious way to help us stay alive. Can we use them at all once we see what their real meaning is? "We read *Civilization and Its Discontents*," says Dean Barzun, "and approve but do not heed." Of the most explicit statements we try to make substitute gratifications, candy to eat in the evenings by our lamps. But there is a sentence in Freud preceding the one I took for my motto. He is speaking of the illnesses of entire societies. "This danger is most menacing where the social forces of cohesion consist predominantly of identifications of the individuals in the group with one another, whilst leading personalities fail to acquire the significance that should fall to them in the process of group-formation. The state of civilization in America at the present day. . . ." If we have also lost, as we seem to have lost, a certain kind of gratification that used to be had from books, we may have gained something too. We may be able to take instead the pleasure of seeing the truth. As the old dog told the pup, you can't eat a book and you can't make love to it. But we can see in our great American romances the true records left by heroes as brave as any we know about. Braver maybe, for America has always been the most civilized country, the frightful land of the future where each man must love his neighbor and hate himself.

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SIDNEY MONAS

Parallelopipeds and Clubfeet[1]

THE LITERARY PSEUDONYM, "Biely," was characteristic of the man who adopted it, for it is a simple Russian adjective meaning "white," suggesting on the one hand purity, freshness, candor, and on the other nothingness, a blank page. The stylist, Biely, whose grotesquely playful prose and coldly wrought poems influenced an entire generation of Russian writers, appears now in a belated translation of his most famous novel (first published in Russia in 1913) almost as wan and indistinct a ghost as the gray portrait on the dust-jacket. It is not simply the translation (awkward and inadequate as that is) but the author's symbolistical hoaxing about with cruelty and destruction, his coy nostalgia for the apocalypse, that casts a puce fin-de-siècle pall over the reader. And yet the book is not without a certain power.

For Biely had verbal deftness, and he had a sense of his own literature that created almost a living *persona* out of it. And he carried a living problem into his books: the inappropriateness of his oversensitivity and European erudition to the great, growling, grumbling Russian world in which he lived. In *St. Petersburg*, he attempted to create a vacuum in the hearts and minds of his readers into which he hoped cleansing angels of destruction would rush.

In some sense, it is a family novel set against the background of the Russian capital in the revolutionary year 1905. Apollon Ableukhov, an elderly bureaucrat, has been deserted by his frivolous wife who has run off to Spain with an Italian tenor. Alone and frightened, this "pale tarantula-like sun of the northern capital" takes refuge in a world of empty formalities and abstract figures. He dreams of saving Russia by importing more American paper-binders, of filling in the vast icy spaces of the world with a network of rectilinear prospects. He meditates on squares and cubes and parallelopipeds, figures which comfort him, recoiling from roundness and the color red. His son, formerly a brilliant student, has absent-mindedly joined a revolutionary society and plans to murder him. The son, abandoned by his mother, rejected by a hare-brained mistress, broods inertly in a room in which a bust of Kant ("naturally") looms amid various sinister oriental and African fixtures, and in which a time-bomb (according to Biely, the basic ordering-mechanism of Western Civilization) ticks relentlessly away until that moment when it will expand infinitely and turn everything around it into mash. There are hoaxes and hallucinations, masquerades, and disguises within disguises, revolutionaries who are police-

[1]ST PETERSBURG, by *Andrey Biely*. Grove Press $4.75. THE TENTS OF WICKEDNESS, by *Peter De Vries*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $3.75. MEMENTO/MORI, by *Murial Spark*. Lippincott. $3.95. THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER DRINA, by *Ivo Andric*. Macmillan. $3.95. TIME WALKED, by *Vera Panova*. Taplinger. $3.50. THE TEMPLE OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION, by *Yukio Mishima*. Knopf. $4.00.

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spies, police-spies who are revolutionaries, and mathematical logicians who are Mongols. Everyone is someone else, and everything is something it isn't. When the mother returns like a warm breath from Spain (or like a superficially civilized existence after the outbreaks of 1905) young Ableukhov hears the cry of the cranes winging their way high above the city noises and wants nothing more than to return to the simple warm country of his childhood; murder and the bomb are forgotten, the mother forgets even the name of the gentleman she ran off with, and the Ableukhovs are reconciled and reunited. The bomb goes off harmlessly, and Biely scores the perverse triumph of making the reader feel disappointed.

In quite another and more successful sense, it is a novel *about* Russian literature, about that mythical St. Petersburg that emerges from the pages of the great Russian writers—the city of arbitrary human will, built on imperial orders, that isolates and alienates man from nature and mind from community, the city of nightmare and hallucination. Biely gives life, and even a kind of coherence, to this image; its lungs are mechanical, but they breathe real air—bitter-cold.

Though the smell of blood is not so thick, American Suburbia should do as well as Russian St. Petersburg for grinding down individual identities. Yet to read Peter De Vries' *Tents of Wickedness* after Biely is like dropping in on a raucous fraternity party after having seen a talented friend commit suicide in an opium den. This noisy pretentious flirting about with corruption seems worse than corruption itself. In an empty, boring book De Vries uses a clever undergraduate talent for surface parody to evoke all the prominent literary styles of the last thirty years in order to make the telling point that Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Hemingway, Joyce, Proust, and Kafka would sound silly too if their conception of their characters had been as trivial and shallow as De Vries'.

Muriel Spark, on the other hand, has taken seriously Socrates' dictum that comedy and tragedy are one. For all the rather British grotesquery of *Memento Mori*, there is terror and pity in it, and a generalizing power that goes beyond the personal and the social and reaches to the human condition as such. To use a group of old people, all over seventy, as a paradigm for human life is a bold stratagem indeed, and Mrs. Spark is both compassionate and outrageously funny in elaborating it. The vanities and delusions of the shriveled and the spent are our own, emphasized and exaggerated by the immediate presence of death as on a battlefield.

One by one the characters receive a mysterious phone call. "Remember you must die," a voice says. Each hears a different voice, and each reacts characteristically. Alec Warner who has detached himself from his predicament by assuming the role of a systematic gerontologist, and who has accumulated a massive cross-indexed file of minute obser-

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vations on the behavior of the very old, carefully takes his own pulse and notes down his reactions. Dame Lettie Colston calls the police, makes the greatest possible social row, then suspects everyone of being in league with "the maniac", disconnects her phone, dismisses her maid and completely shuts herself off from what she assumes is a conspiring world. (The maid tells a friend who tells a friend; and Dame Lettie is murdered in her bed by a quite ordinary night-prowling burglar.) Charmian Piper, a former novelist, thanks the "very polite young man" for calling. Jean Taylor, Charmian's former maid and pupil, now languishing in a government hospital ward (where at first she accepts the title "Granny" bestowed on all by the inevitably indifferent doctors and nurses as an Hungarian Count might accept "Comrade", but where in the long run she comes to terms with herself and those around her with great dignity and power of spirit) suggests that the caller is Death himself.

There is one scene in which Charmian Piper (in her eighties) decides to brew herself a cup of tea which reminded me of nothing so much as Tolstoy's description of the Battle of Borodino. It is absurd and moving and true. And there is the scene in the hospital in which the really senile cases are moved into the old-age ward where Jean Taylor lies on her bed of pain. For that matter, the writing throughout is adroit, unpretentious, and immensely effective. It has the unique distinction of being charming and appalling at the same time.

Rarely does a writer have the good fortune to find a translator whose translation is in itself a tribute to his work. Such is the case with Ivo Andric, whose masterpiece, *The Bridge on the Drina,* Lovett Edwards has rendered into an English that, like the original, demands to be read aloud. It is not exactly a novel, and if I call it an epic I do not want to conjure up the inappropriate shade of Kazantzakis. But it has the dignity and the relentless objectivity and distance of epic.

The bridge is a real bridge, but it is also as clear a symbol of time and space as can be formed out of stone. Spanning a formidable river, this bridge connects "shining, terrible Stambul" with the South Slav lands, East with West; but also the commercial and the military with the beautiful, mortality with eternity. Conceived by a Vezir of the Turkish Sultan in the sixteenth century, it combines at its very inception the normal utilitarian purposes of a bridge with a vision of death (in the image of a deaf surly ferryman, a cold rushing green river, a clumsy half-rotten boat, and mothers wailing for their kidnapped children) experienced by the Vezir when, as a child, he was taken from his native Bosnian village for the janissary corps—a vision that has worked its way into the core of his physical being.

Architects and masons from Europe and Asia direct the building, and the forced, unwilling, grumbling, downtrodden villagers set stone on laborious stone. There are bloody accidents, rebellions, suppressions; but the bridge slowly rises, in the full sweep of its eleven arches,

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with its broad *kapia* and *sofa* at the center, around which the future private and public life of the town (Vyšegrad) will organize itself. Unwillingly at first (its conception is beyond them, and its construction is felt as merely oppressive) and very slowly but profoundly, the bridge grips the imagination of the inhabitants. Songs and legends transform its history. Across it move side-ripples of the great events of world history (these are all formed elsewhere, and the town merely suffers and endures them as they move across the bridge) and the daily events in the life of the town: armies and christening parties. Old men drink coffee on the *kapia*, young men talk and yearn restlessly, and once a beautiful woman makes herself legend by leaping into the Drina on her wedding day. The bridge is not immortal, and time and events change it, but so slowly and invisibly that it becomes for the inhabitants a perspective of eternity.

The author's perspective is almost that of the bridge: not god-like, but as close to that of a god as the reach of a large mind's experience will go. Like the bridge, he suffers the atrocities of history, and in the suffering makes something beautiful. Moslems, Christians and Jews are clearly delineated as such and clearly seen in the same perspective. Even the conquerors—Austrians and Turks—have their temporality of courage twined with folly.

The author has no spokesman among the characters, but closest to him in spirit is the Moslem merchant Alihodja. Conservative, fatalistic, passionately religious, he nevertheless insists on applying a stubborn rationality to the swing of events. It is not, curiously, because of his religion or his conservatism that trouble comes to him, but because of his rationality; nevertheless, he proudly maintains it. When Alihodja stands up alone in the frightened town to tell a fanatical Turkish commander that it is folly to resist the oncoming Austrians, he is nailed by his ear to a post on the bridge. When he insists on remaining in his shop near the bridge throughout a Serbian bombardment, he is cursed and almost executed by the Austrian authorities. (His comment on the "civilized" Austrians: "They destroy in order to build, and they build in order to destroy. . . .") The First World War destroys the bridge, the stubbornly rational structure that orders Alihodja's world, and Alihodja himself cannot survive it. About his death there is something of the fall of Troy.

Vera Panova is one of the more gifted and prolific Soviet writers to have appeared since the last war. She was never a Party writer, nor did she directly concern herself with major political or social themes. Since the thaw, she has become increasingly absorbed with the humdrum, the ordinary, the seemingly trivial and indisputably private events of every day. This is not easy. Pressure by official critics and state publishing houses need hardly be described here. But there is another, perhaps new, probably from the point of view of what it can do to a writer, more dangerous and more subtle pressure. Now that

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small areas and islands of private life have been opened for possible habitation, they swarm with the most intense and sanguine of hopes. There is a large and sympathetic Soviet reading audience prepared to accept writers who attempt to convey the personal tragedy of a public destiny; but to accept a private life not directly touched by public affairs as in itself inherently tragic would be almost more than a Soviet audience could bear. It is an optimism born of terror, a sincere but distorting necessity, to which Panova unfortunately cannot resist submitting her judgment as a writer, and which mars the otherwise excellent little novel *Seriozha* recently translated under the inappropriately poetic title *Time Walked.*

The book itself (not so much Russian as it is feminine) is presented in terms of the sensibility of an ordinary, sympathetic six year old boy. Delicately, it hangs by a hair. Panova conveys the essential helplessness of a child, and the painful, humorous, touchingly beautiful inner tricks and devices by means of which he tries to make the formidable, incomprehensible world into a world he can manage. Unfortunately, what might otherwise have been a small but flawless jewel is marred by a sentimental, or at least unrealistic ending, in which too much depends on the wisdom, insight, and character of a well-meaning adult, and which shifts attention from the tragic helplessness of the child to the strength of the adult in order to project a falsely optimistic future.

One of the few genuinely surprising, subtle, complex and profound novels of ideas to have appeared since *Man's Fate* is Yukio Mishima's *Temple of the Golden Pavilion.* Like Dostoevski, Mishima builds his novel around a sensational newspaper event—the burning of an historic temple by a seemingly unbalanced Zen acolyte who testified before a Japanese court that he had felt the temple's beauty an intolerable reproach to his own mortality. Out of this story, Mishima has fashioned a wildly original, paradoxical series of clashing meditations and actions, which in their power of sensual evocation remind one of Turgenev and in boldness of presented relationships between ideas and people of Dostoevski. Beauty and death, cruelty and compassion, action and contemplation, constantly dissolve into and emerge from a richness of sensual detail and a psychological mirroring of sensual detail that is truly extraordinary.

Mizoguchi, the brooding sensitive stuttering incendiary, is the narrator. His father is a poor Zen priest, tubercular and slowly dying, who escapes the miseries of his world by creating out of them an ideal image, perfect and eternal. This image takes the form of the Golden Temple, but Mizoguchi, who absorbs it from his father, knows that it may be on the one hand smaller and more perfect than the Kyoto temple, or on the other vaguer and more immense than the world itself, casting a golden shadow on the fields of his native landscape.

His mother is quite different. Poor, pathetic, simple-minded, she

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accepts and suffers the world as it is, in purely passive submission. Her one spark of cunning is enkindled by the emptiest vanity of the social world. She wishes to see her son apprenticed to the Golden Temple, not like her husband that he may find a perfect detachment in its shadow, but that he may embark on a successful career. Mizoguchi, though he feels the pull of both, is not like either. The following, his most powerful childhood memory, defines his position.

A distant relative has come to visit. In their poor house, all must sleep in one bed under the one mosquito-net. The movement of the net wakens Mizoguchi. It moves like the sea, in turbulent fits—an image of elemental sensual energy, like fire, that recurs throughout the book—an image at once of the life-force and of dissolving death. As soon as Mizoguchi grasps that his mother and their visitor are performing "the deed that is like death," his father's hand closes over his eyes, and his father makes him promise not to look. He spends the rest of the night with his eyes closed, hearing or imagining the sound of waves.

During the war, Mizoguchi the acolyte feels very close to the Golden Temple. Beautiful as it is, hard as it seems, its body like his own is made of combustible carbon and will perish in an air-raid. But the Americans spare Kyoto, that city "too anxious to preserve its old things just as they were" and the shrines and temples that were "forgetting the memories of the red-hot ash that had been born from inside." Having survived the war, and threatened with immortality, the Temple becomes (for Mizoguchi) an empty shell. Prompted by an American soldier, Mizoguchi performs a terrible deed which is at the same time a desecration of the temple and an attempt to contact, through cruelty, the springs of life from which he feels cut off by the Temple as by his father's hand. To compound the desecration he presents two cartons of cigarettes (paid by the soldier) to the Temple's master, and with suppressed excitement contemplates the master's involvement in his act.

But the master refuses to feel involved. He merely smokes the cigarettes. And all the other little fleshly corruptions the master indulges in—his visits to the geisha houses, his quiet filching of Temple funds—Mizoguchi discovers these are merely tokens of his contempt for the round pink flesh he grooms and pampers "as a concubine for the spirit." Mizoguchi's crimes concern him not in the least. The master's lack of involvement in the human predicament, and at the same time the utter conventionality of his seeming escape from it, intensifies Mizoguchi's hatred for the Golden Temple.

On the day the war ends, the master appears before his acolytes in a priestly red robe (forbidden during the war) and recites and interprets a peculiarly ambiguous, yet (on this of all days) seemingly trivial Zen *koan* concerning Nansen, his disciple Joshu, and a kitten. The story seems simple. A kitten leaps out of the grass and is taken up by Nansen's disciples, but they fall to quarreling over it. Nansen resolves

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their argument by killing the kitten. When his favorite disciple Joshu returns later that evening, Nansen tells him what has happened, and Joshu responds by removing his sandals and putting them on his head. The master's interpretation is a rigidly conventional one. Nansen's action represents the cutting off of discord which arises from undue attention to particulars. Joshu's action represents "infinite magnanimity", for by wearing a pair of filthy and despised objects on his head he has given a "practical demonstration of the way of the Bodhisattva." The occasion for the sermon baffles Mizoguchi, but his friend Tsurukawa suggests: "I think that the real point of tonight's lecture was that on the day of our defeat, he should not have said a word about it and should have talked about killing a cat."

Mizoguchi's only other friend, the clubfooted student Kashiwagi, emerges as the second hero of the novel, a kind of Japanese Bazarov. Cruel, even malevolent, his will is nevertheless backed by a superb courage and a stubborn insistence on unblinking knowledge. The only purpose he sees in action is to clean the world "so that it might never again contain anything unknown." For him, to live and to destroy are one, and he affirms life by deliberate acts of cruelty. His motto remains: "I can't stand an unknown life"—in spite of the fact that all his knowledge merely renders more acute his sense of his own deformity. "Love is the effort to join reality with the apparition"—and for Kashiwagi, for whom there can be no love, there must be no "apparitions."

Mizoguchi is at the same time an admirer and a critic of Kashiwagi. Hearing him improvise on the flute, Mizoguchi is impressed by "the uselessness of beauty, the fact that the beauty which had passed through his body left no mark there whatsoever, that it changed absolutely nothing. . . . If beauty could be something like this for me, too, how light would my life become!" With complete absorption he takes in Kashiwagi's reference to the proverb:

> "When ye meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha! When ye meet your ancestor, kill your ancestor! When ye meet a disciple of Buddha, kill the disciple! When ye meet your father and mother, kill your father and mother! When ye meet your kin, kill your kin! Only thus will ye attain deliverance. Only thus will ye escape the trammels of material things and become free."

It is Kashiwagi's brilliant and original interpretation of the *koan* previously interpreted in such an utterly conventional way by the Temple's master that goads Mizoguchi on to the final burning of the Temple. Nevertheless, Mizoguchi knows that the world is not entirely as Kashiwagi sees it. He has also begun to have glimmers of the tragic nature of Kashiwagi's predicament, and Kashiwagi cannot bear to have himself thought of as in any sense wretched or tragic.

"You see," continued Kashiwagi, "that's what beauty is like. To have

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killed the kitten . . . seemed just like having extracted a painful decayed tooth, like having gouged out beauty. Yet it was uncertain whether or not this had been really a final solution. The root of the beauty had not been severed and, even though the kitten was dead, the kitten's beauty might very well still be alive. And so, you see, it was in order to satirize the glibness of this solution that Joshu put those sandals on his head. He knew, so to speak, that there was no possible solution other than enduring the pain of the decayed tooth. . . ." I was afraid to remain silent and hastened to ask: "So which of the two are you? Father Nansen or Joshu?" "Well, let's see. As things are now, I am Nansen and you're Joshu. But someday you might become Nansen and I might become Joshu. The problem has a way of changing—like a cat's eyes."

Mizoguchi remembers the fate of a beautiful girl, Uiko, who had once rejected his timid advances and denounced him as a stutterer. He had cursed her for her remoteness, so like the remote beauty of the Golden Temple. But she had transformed his curse by a curious public confession of fallibility. She had betrayed her lover, an army deserter, to the police, and then allowed that lover in a rage to shoot her down from his place of hiding.

. . . . She was living in the same world as we, the witnesses; and she was accepting the nature that surrounded us all. She was walking up those steps as our representative. And I could not help thinking breathlessly: "By her betrayal she has at last accepted me too. Now she belongs to me!"

A moment later, her lover fires and is then himself shot down by the police. Mizoguchi's burning of the Temple becomes, in a sense, a recapitulation of her betrayal—a betrayal that is at the same time mysteriously felt as a kind of affirmation. The last four words that Mizoguchi writes as he watches the Golden Temple burn, dragging on a cigarette, are equally mysterious, but their effect under the circumstances is absolutely hair-raising: "I want to live."

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HARVEY SWADOS

Good and Short

OF SOME DOZEN-ODD ANTHOLOGIES of short stories that have come my way this season, I have selected these eight books[1] for discussion, partly because they represent a good international cross-section and partly because they are all books that I can conscientiously recommend—an unusually pleasant experience for a reviewer of fiction.

The greatest name on the list, now dead for a quarter of a century, and canonized with a Nobel Prize, is that of Luigi Pirandello, whose reputation in this country rests more on his clever and sophisticated plays than on his novels and stories. Now, in this anthology of twenty-two stories written between 1905 and 1917, we have the opportunity to reassess Pirandello as a story-teller. The protagonists of the stories range from the sulfur miners and farmers of his native Sicily to the petit-bourgeoisie of the provincial towns and the poor of the big cities. Pirandello's canvas is fantastically large, and his unquenchable liveliness—unlike the stories of another deceased Nobel award winner, Sigrid Undset, published earlier this year by Knopf, which seem stiff and dated—is thoroughly captivating.

I think it important to note that this collection is not one which can be read consecutively and uninterruptedly, as we customarily do with books of fiction. Pirandello tends to treat the short story, even when it is really short, not as a sliver or fragment, but more as a miniature novel, so that with each new beginning we are plunged anew directly into the maelstrom of an entire ocean of lives. It is simply too exhausting to move directly from one such experience to another without a break. (Perhaps publishers would ultimately meet with less resistance in the merchandizing of books of short stories if instead of ignoring this they would capitalize on it by publicizing—with justification—the fact that volumes like the Pirandello should be lingered over and left lying around so that they can be dipped into at leisure over a long period of time.) But as you browse you will come upon the heartrending "The Soft Touch of Grass," about a lonely widower whose attempt to start a new life is misunderstood, or upon the wonderfully melodramatic "The Black Shawl," the tale of a middle-aging middle-class spinster who is made pregnant by a peasant lad and forced to marry him by the brother whom she has raised. Wherever you turn

[1] SHORT STORIES, by *Luigi Pirandello*. Simon & Schuster. $3.95. SELECTED STORIES, by *Mary Lavin*. Macmillan. $3.95. ACROSS PARIS AND OTHER STORIES, by *Marcel Aymé*. Harper Bros. $3.50. THE ZULU AND THE ZEIDE, by *Dan Jacobson*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $3.75. THE WHITE HOUND, Stories by *Ward Dorrance* and *Thomas Mabry*. University of Missouri Press. $3.75. THE POISON TREE, by *Walter Clemons*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.50. GOODBYE, COLUMBUS, by *Philip Roth*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75. THE LITTLE DISTURBANCES OF MAN, by *Grace Paley*. Doubleday. $3.50.

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you will encounter a tale bursting with the juices of life, narrated by such an obviously natural-born storyteller that you are going to want to hunt up his other fiction in order to see what you have been missing. I can think of no higher recommendation for a book of fiction, other than that these stories are as fresh and moving now as they must have been when they were first published.

I am impressed too with the stories of Mary Lavin, the American-born Irish writer who has until now been little more than a name to me. It is true that in a few of her dozen stories there is a sense of strain and contrivance, and that in almost all of them she is obsessively concerned with death—but if nothing more were to be said the reader would be left with a fantastically wrong notion of her work. For Miss Lavin is fortunately endowed with the mocking Irish sense of humor (see, in addition to some of the bitterly anti-clerical stories, "My Vocation," a first-person story about a tough Dublin kid who imagines—briefly—that she has the call to be a nun) and the passionate sense of the importance of the most narrow and wretched lives which has always informed the best of the Irish writers as it has such Latin masters as Pirandello. The two finest stories in the collection for me are illustrative of this moving, disciplined passion: "Assigh," about a farmer's daughter who has been crippled by a blow from her surly father and attempts to relieve her thwarted impulses in her brother's life, and the equally masterful and more concentrated "Brigid," which reveals the results of a farm wife's tragic resentment of her husband's patient devotion to his idiot sister. These stories are suffused with a calm clarity and a sense of inevitability truly classic in outline and in proportion. Miss Lavin has also contributed a brief and modest, but thoughtful, preface to this selection which will be of more than passing interest to the student of the short story as a form.

Across the Channel Marcel Aymé continues to pursue a very different course from that of the Irish or the Italian storytellers. Earthy he is, but passionate never—or hardly ever. With an eyebrow cocked at human absurdity, M. Aymé the old pro (his list of books must be nearly as high as the Eiffel Tower by now) coolly works over the frailties of smug peasants, stuffy petit-bourgeois cuckolds and harassed novelists with the aid of an endlessly inventive collection of tricks and gimmicks. There are a couple of cautionary notes that ought to be inserted at this point: First, the selection consists of stories taken from books published between 1932 and 1947; his most recent work is unrepresented in *Across Paris*. Second, the translations are very English; those who will be taken aback by French toughs muttering, "Coo, Guv'nor, 'e ain't narky, not by 'arf," should surely be forewarned.

Why then do I pause to call this book to your attention? Mainly because it is practically a manual in how the gimmick-story can be brought to a glittering point of perfection. I suppose that people with a constitutional aversion to reading about men who can walk through walls will prefer seeing the fantasy in the movies (which of course

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they can do). But then they will miss the great one about the saintly man whose halo so annoyed his wife (it glowed in the dark) that in an effort to shake it off he agreed to plunge into the commission, one after the other, of the seven deadly sins. Or the tale of "Martin the Novelist," who kept killing off his characters until a particularly sexy one came to life and bewitched his publisher. And the mordant title story of black marketing and ambiguous morality, which depends not at all on trickery, but is in sober truth one of the most moving works of fiction to have come out of the Second World War. The book is worth owning for this story alone.

The first thing that needs to be explained, perhaps, about *The Zulu and The Zeide,* by Dan Jacobson, the South African Jewish writer now resident in England, is that a Zeide is not a mysterious Tanganyikan or Afrikaans term; it is simply Yiddish for Grandpa. And Mr. Jacobson, who has lived and published in this country and is well-known here as a gifted and prolific young writer, is for the most part concerned in this collection with the clash and clang of conflicting cultures. In the fine title story, surely one of his best, it is Jewish and tribal African; in "Droit de Seigneur," about two elegant Poles in a slummy Braamfontein hotel, it is Jewish and Gentile; in "Two Women," a sensitive love story in the Lawrentian manner, it is English and Afrikaner; in "The Box," a tender story of a boy's lack of understanding of the family servant's devotion, it is black and white. To be sure, I am oversimplifying; the final story, "The Boss," which has to do with the contrasting treatment accorded a secretary by father and son, is not at all concerned with ethnic differences, and might as easily have been written by any of a number of American writers anxious to deal with the struggle between the generations. But by and large I think it true to say that Mr. Jacobson has been most profoundly influenced as a man and a writer by the terrible tensions which are tearing South African society to pieces, and that if he were not possessed by the pitiful and wrenching drama of this theme he would in all likelihood be no more interesting to read than any of a dozen other literate young men with an itch to write. It is to be hoped that Mr. Jacobson's removal from South Africa—and what a terrible commentary on the crazily foredoomed racism of the South African ruling group is the departure of so many of its best writers—will not serve to deprive him of the nourishment essential for his literary growth.

When we return to the United States the first thing we observe is that three of the American writers under consideration here are Southerners, and that their characters continue to be driven by conflicts similar to those which oppress Mr. Jacobson's people. The Southern themes have not yet lost their validity or their power to inspire original literary productivity.

But before talking specifically about any of these books by Americans, I should like to interject a parenthetical comment. The last time I had occasion to discuss the short story in these pages, I observed

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that publishers were so pessimistic about the sales prospects of story collections that they were hesitant to publish the collections of established writers and for all practical purposes were not interested in bringing out books of stories by new writers. Now, of these five American short story writers, only Mr. Dorrance has published a novel. Obviously a new attitude toward the book of short fiction pieces is taking hold in the publishing business. It deserves every encouragement from readers and writers—and it is to be hoped that a way will be found to get these new writers and their books into the hands of the public that they should have.

Mr. Dorrance and Thomas Mabry are published in tandem by a university press, it is true, with each represented by four stories. Both are Southerners, both in their fifties, and both deliberate craftsmen. Indeed they have so much in common that one is hard put to it, particularly after reading a hundred or so stories by other writers, to remember which man wrote which story. But this is manifestly unfair. What matters is that they share that enviable Southern gift for telling a story as though it *must* have happened, in a prose that reads as smoothly and powerfully as the language of the English masters; and as always in the best of the white Southern writers, underneath everything there lies that profound guilt and tender concern for the fate of the downtrodden Negro that is poles apart from the caricatures or the well-intentioned sentimentalizing of their Northern counterparts.

Of the eight stories (mostly published originally by *Sewanee Review*, although Mr. Dorrance's "The White Hound" first appeared in this journal) I think I like best Mr. Dorrance's "The Devil on a Hot Afternoon" and Mr. Mabry's novella "Lula Borrow." "The Devil" has to do with what a spinster gentlewoman sees one day when she tracks down her little niece and nephew and comes upon an unexpected scene of violence and death, while "Lula Borrow" is very much in the manner of "A Simple Heart" and yet succeeds in telling its own truth about an ignorant but indomitable Negro woman and her desperately lonely and deprived existence. It is a very beautiful story, and I could wish only that both Mr. Mabry and Mr. Dorrance were more productive.

The South does continue to turn out good storytellers with more predictable regularity, let us face it, than any other single section of the country. As an unreconstructed Northerner, I have asked a number of Southern friends to account for the phenomenon without referring to tired agrarian notions; they have come up with a variety of answers —there is *always* something going on in a big family or a small town, telling stories is a way of passing time, language is different down south. Well, in any case along comes a twenty-nine year old Texan named Walter Clemons who, while he is not yet in the same league with some of the writers already discussed, has written a number of first-rate stories. I do feel that his collection is decidedly uneven, and

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that he might even have been better advised to hold off until he could have assembled a body of work with a more unified impact. Nonetheless, there are several stories which demonstrate most effectively Mr. Clemons' not inconsiderable gifts. Both the title story, "The Poison Tree," a really unsparing portrait of a neurotic girl, and "The Dark Roots of the Rose," a wonderfully operatic Southern melodrama in the manner of Penn Warren (it cries out to be set to music), are going to intrigue a lot of readers, and make them impatient to see what Mr. Clemons will do next.

Of the last two short story writers to be considered, Philip Roth has already been so widely praised and honored with such a variety of awards that any further comment on my part may seem an act of supererogation; while the other, Grace Paley, has been all but completely ignored. If I insist on coupling the two, it is not at all because I wish to detract from the attention paid to Mr. Roth, but simply because I feel that Mrs. Paley's work is worthy too of a couple of shouts and a huzzah—and because it stems from the same soil as Mr. Roth's.

In fact the last few seasons have seen the emergence of a group of young novelists and short story writers with a number of common traits that seem to me to derive from such influential authors as Saul Bellow and Herbert Gold. In addition to Mr. Roth and Mrs. Paley, I would name Thomas Berger (whose *Crazy In Berlin* is certainly one of the most brilliant first novels in years) and Alfred Grossman (whose *Acrobat Admits* did not receive the attention it warranted) as among those who are developing a nervous muscular prose perfectly suited to the exigencies of an age which seems at once appalling and ridiculous. These are metropolitan writers, most of them are Jewish, and they are specialists in a kind of cranky prose-poetry that often depends for its effectiveness as much on how it is ordered, or on how it looks on the printed page, as it does on what it is expressing. This is risky writing—self-absorption can all too easily degenerate into self-satisfaction, and jazzy language can all too easily be made use of to disguise the absence of any attitudes more substantial than inflated banalities—but when it comes off it is tremendously exciting. Small wonder that these writers have so quickly developed into what might almost be categorized as a school.

"There is a place," begins a story of Grace Paley's, "where dumbwaiters boom, doors slam, dishes crash; every window is a mother's mouth bidding the street shut up, go skate somewhere else, come home."

The place might belong to any of these writers; in the case of Philip Roth it is Newark, which he renders so faithfully as to send the shivers down your spine. "Goodbye, Columbus" itself is a novella of some 135 pages, a saga of the summer romance and subsequent disillusion of a boy who "Whenever anyone asks me where I went to school I come right out with: Newark Colleges of Rutgers University." The materials

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of the romance are so stupefyingly familiar that they will not be recounted here; what is important is that Mr. Roth has succeeded brilliantly in making them as important as a letter from home for one who has been starved for news. I finished the story wishing that Mr. Roth had not seen fit to finish at that point, but had gone on to tell me more. Instead he goes on with five more stories, not all as richly detailed, funny, or moving as the title story, but in sum so satisfyingly revelatory of the author's fiendishly accurate eye for the minutiae of middle-class Jewish life and of his sense of what these add up to that on the evidence of this one book it hardly seems possible that Philip Roth will not very soon become one of our most important writers.

I am happy to testify to my belief that the same holds true for Mrs. Paley. She begins one story: "No doubt that is Eddie Teitelbaum on the topmost step of 1434, a dark-jawed, bossy youth in need of repair. He is dredging a cavity with a Fudgsicle stick. He is twitching the cotton in his ear. He is sniffing and snarling and swallowing spit because of rotten drainage." She begins another: "Up early or late, it never matters, the day gets away from me. Summer or winter, the shade of trees or their hard shadow, I never get into my Rice Krispies until noon." And then she goes on as bold as brass to disclose to us the full ironic intent of her overall title, *The Little Disturbances of Man*. Her language is so wild and fanciful that from time to time it takes off into a realm that borders on the surrealist; her vision is of sexy little girls, loving and bickering couples, envenomed suburbanites, yowling job-hunters in an America that is nutty but so recognizable that it hurts.

And yet, tough and harsh as her people are, they are capable too of tenderness and wisdom, as in "An Interest in Life," in which a young wife tells of her desertion by her husband and her courtship by the son of the lady downstairs. At one point she observes of her husband,

> But for his own comfort, he should have done better lifewise and moneywise. I was happy, but I am now in possession of knowledge that this is wrong. Happiness isn't so bad for a woman. She gets fatter, she gets older, she could lie down, nuzzling a regiment of men and little kids, she could just die of the pleasure. But men are different, they have to own money, or they have to be famous, or everybody on the block has to look up to them from the cellar stairs. . . . A woman counts her children and acts snotty, like she invented life, but men *must* do well in the world. I know that men are not fooled by being happy.

If this season had seen only the publication of Grace Paley's and Philip Roth's collected stories, it would have to be accounted an unusual one. But when we add to them all the others which we have noted, our emotion must be one of gratitude and delight at the inexhaustible wealth available in the constant rebirth of this ancient art form for those of us who hunger for news of the human personality.

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IRVING SINGER

Art and Sociology

IN THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS American aestheticians have turned away from the sociological approach to art history. Much of it emanated from a Marxian philosophy with ulterior motives; all of it seemed to rumble along with the crudity and cunning of a Hegelian juggernaut. The book under review[1] is sociological aesthetics of a somewhat different sort. Compared to the pompous system-making of his predecessors, Hauser's approach is modest and empirical. It also shows signs of honest self-criticism remarkable in a philosopher. In his Preface Hauser confesses that "the most serious defect I now see in my former book [*The Social History of Art*] consists in a failure to apply the dialectical method cautiously enough." The present book is sufficiently cautious.

As Hauser describes it, the sociological approach studies art in relation to social conditioning. It is an historical technique, accounting for the origin of an artist's style and outlook by reference to the environment in which he lives. Since it is merely genetic, it makes no attempt to define artistic excellence or analyze aesthetic components. In contrast to Hegel and Marx, Hauser denies that art history follows a unitary pattern. He rejects the idea that exhaustive knowledge about social conditions would enable us to deduce the occurrence of a particular work or even an art-form. "Socially conditioned though it [art] may be, the essential unpredictability of the artist's creative gifts renders futile all prediction in the field of art."

To insist so strenuously upon the limitations of sociology is to free oneself from the classical formulations of dialectical theory. Indeed Hauser does not seem to commit himself to anything in Marx other than the concept of ideology. But in taking this concept as a basic, all-governing premise, he does align himself with the Marxian attitude. That all art expresses social aims either overtly or covertly, either consciously or unconsciously, either positively or negatively —this much of Marxism Hauser accepts as indispensable to a philosophy of art history. Since the artist may be the vehicle of social expression without realizing it, Hauser has no difficulty in showing how ideology is parallel to Freudian rationalization. In an extremely suggestive chapter he argues that Freud's aesthetics is weakest in the doctrines of sublimation and symbolization, strongest in the concept of rationalization—the transmuting of biological impulses into spiritual superstructure. Despite the obvious differences between psychoanalysis and dialectical philosophy, Hauser emphasizes the way in which each treats the artist as a man who expresses something—

[1] THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART HISTORY, by *Arnold Hauser*. Knopf. $7.50.

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impulses, social conditions—which he himself may never fully recognize.

It is Wölfflin's use of a similar principle that attracts Hauser to his ideas about "art history without names." For Wölfflin the artist is the unwitting conveyor of styles which succeed one another in patterns determined by their own internal logic. In this context, however, the notions of ideology and rationalization lose all significance. With its refusal to consider anything other than the art work and the history of style, Wölfflin's position is the very antithesis of the sociologist's. Showing how Wölfflin duplicates the idealistic absurdities of Hegel and the Historicists, Hauser concludes that stylistic change has no internal logic. "There is simply no other explanation of stylistic change but a sociological or psychological explanation; any art history that wants to go beyond simple analysis of the material is obliged to relate the unique work of art to psychic dispositions and collective aspirations."

In many respects Hauser's methodology is quite attractive. Like all revisionist philosophies it compromises between extremes and appeals to the good sense of everyone who fears intellectual fanaticism. Above all, it is humble, claiming little for itself, continually reminding us of its own limitations. And what it does claim may seem moderate enough. The artist lives in the world like everyone else. Whether he inhabits an ivory tower or one that is covered by ivy, he has been conditioned by the society of his times. If an art critic wishes to concentrate upon this fact, assuming a sociological stance without forgetting that many other postures are equally appropriate, why should any fair-minded philosopher deny him the opportunity? Were this the only thing Hauser wished to maintain, all would be well and we could clap hands on a bargain.

Unfortunately, there is more to it. For one thing, Hauser's methodological modesty is only superficial. For him the sociological approach is more than just one among many. It is not even chief among equals, as Augustus liked to think of himself, but rather "a focal discipline in our day, one upon which the entire world-view of the age centers." With this conviction in mind, it is not surprising for Hauser to argue that Freud's psychology and Wölfflin's analysis of style both depend on sociology for their proper employment. After interpreting Freud's entire perspective as a manifestation of nineteenth century romanticism, Hauser tries to show that Freudian concepts themselves have to be translated into sociological categories. Thus the personal conflicts within an artist that Freud might take to be fundamental are better understood as a manifestation of social chaos; instead of treating institutions as the result of psychological repression, we are to explain repression as itself resulting from the coerciveness of existing institutions; the wish-fulfillment which allegedly triggers all works of art is to be taken as the search for a society worth living in rather than the quest for psychological well-

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being. In the case of Wölfflin we have already seen that denial of an internal logic leads Hauser to maintain that stylistic changes are explicable only in psychological and sociological terms. Since psychological depends upon sociological, the ineluctable conclusion is unmistakably clear.

Now I am perfectly happy to think of Freud in his nineteenth century context, and I entirely agree that most of his ideas need to be supplemented by others that are drawn from sociology and social psychology. But this is not to say that the sociological approach is more fundamental than the psychological, that it furnishes a better guide to what is expressed by works of art or how they originate. Similarly, I think Hauser does well to reject the idea of an internal logic which causes one style to succeed another. But from this it does not follow that stylistic change can only be explained in sociological, and never in stylistic, terms. Styles are historical phenomena present to the consciousness of artists as well as aestheticians. Unless we admit that they affect artistic production, I fail to see how we can explain Cézanne's rejection of impressionism, Wagner's rebellion against recitative and *bel canto* opera, Rimbaud's refusal to write in classical meter, etc. Of the three approaches Hauser examines—not to mention others—I see no reason for thinking that the sociological is more ultimate, more thoroughly explanatory, more generally reliable. We may certainly take Rimbaud's attitude toward classical meter as an implied expression of disdain for seventeenth century aristocracy. This kind of analysis can be very useful. As an explanation, however, it is not a bit superior to analyzing his technique in a purely stylistic manner. There is no metaphysical order in which Rimbaud is primarily a social creature and only secondarily an innovator of poetic style. He is both of these things equally, and many more.

But even if the sociologist were to renounce his irredentist claims, even if he were to accept the benign and democratic pluralism I am advocating, I wonder what his approach can actually do. In the course of Hauser's writing (to say nothing of Hegel and Marx) at least four different ideas are horribly scrambled together. First, that what the artist does results from social conditioning, in the sense that he would have done different things if he had been born in a different age; second, that artists often express attitudes and opinions about social phenomena, these pronouncements being as much a part of their work as anything else; third, that it is in the nature of art that one way or another its content expresses social aims and conditions, not merely attitudes *about* them; fourth, that everything in the work of art originates, either proximately or ultimately, in some development within the social structure.

The first idea seems obviously valid to me, and I welcome any sociological critic who can use it intelligently. I think Hauser himself does so when he describes the indirect path which connects the growth of urban economy in the middle ages with the beginnings of Gothic

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naturalism. The second idea seems equally acceptable, though there is much we would have to say if—as they need not be—questions of aesthetic relevance were raised. The third and fourth ideas, however, are suspect. To begin with, social aims are not the same as social conditions. Does the artist express both? At the same time? In the same way? And what is meant by "social conditions"? Are they everything in a society, or only factors of economic production? At times Hauser sounds as if only the latter counts; at other times he throws in political and institutional organization; occasionally, he appears to admit customs, prevalent opinions, even philosophical doctrines. I see no reason for excluding any of these factors, especially since Hauser ostensibly wishes to avoid the reductivism of Marxian materialism. But what he does mean I am not at all sure.

Even if these questions can be silenced, however, I feel the third and fourth ideas are oddly sinister. The third idea speaks of art expressing social conditions. And this often happens. Delacroix's painting of Liberty on the barricades expresses the heroic turmoil of the French Revolution, just as Paolo Veronese's communal feasts express the material splendor of Venetian commercialism. But not all works of art express in this sense. The paintings of Van Gogh express force and vitality; they do not express the force and vitality of any social group. Since no artist springs full-grown from the forehead of Zeus, all of them are conditioned in ways that interest sociologists. But to think that their works inevitably express social phenomena is about as tenable as the primitive belief that warriors have heart for battle if only they eat the heart of a ferocious animal. However art may come into being, it need not express its causal factors any more than the sound of a violin expresses the scraping of horsehair against cat-gut.

The fourth idea represents a modification of the third. The sociological aesthetician reformulates his argument as follows: Perhaps art does not necessarily express social conditions, but at least it *manifests* them in the sense that its style, its outlook, and everything else can be traced back to some prior phenomena in society. This idea may sound like the first one I mentioned, but actually differs. It maintains that social conditioning enters into the very content of art, not merely brings it about. By its ideological function art internalizes within itself social forces relevant to its creation, even if the artist does not realize what he is doing.

I can see how this fourth idea might elicit support. If someone were to say that the art of Kandinsky and Jackson Pollock manifies the social unrest of the twentieth century, would we refuse to listen? Not at all. We might even agree. Still it would be very misleading to think of this condition as having been internalized by their art. For no matter how hard you look you will never find any social commentary in the abstract designs. If we think of these paintings as manifesting social unrest, it is because we know how radically they differ from earlier art and consider this kind of break characteristic of our period.

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Or else we associate the chaotic quality of the designs with other examples of chaos in the twentieth century. In neither event has the social condition been embodied in the paintings. On the contrary, the paintings determine, in part, the nature of the social condition. Would we speak so glibly about the social unrest of the twentieth century unless we thought the Kandinskys and the Pollocks were characteristic of its artists?

Though Hauser admits the creative freedom of art, he nevertheless believes that the "real origin" of a style must be found in society: "the first stimulus for a change of style always originates—even if not exclusively—in the emergence of new classes of interested persons." But these new classes, and their new interests, where did they come from? Are we so sure that they did not themselves originate in some previous artistic or intellectual movement? Hauser claims that we could not understand romanticism without seeing in it the presence of the French Revolution. But could we understand the French Revolution either unless we saw in it the beginnings of romanticism?

The model which often seems to govern Hauser's thought is this: first there exists society, later arts come into being and subtly introduce it into their various media. Hauser quotes with mammoth approval the motto *"Primum vivere, deinde philosophari."* But this is the motto of romantic school-boys who feel they must sow wild oats now in order to have something to reap in old age. It is not true that first one lives and then philosophizes, though it is true that the more one has lived the better one's philosophy becomes. Likewise, art does not show the effects of a society which can be defined independently of it. The artist does not manifest social conditions in the way that someone manifests privately the pain he has stoically borne before strangers. A society does not speak through its art, but artists speaking through their media contribute to the voices that define society.

There is something very ironic about the sociological approach. It originated as a bulwark against the dogma of art for art's sake and sought to reinstate the artist as a bonafide member of society. Yet the very term Marx used—superstructure—itself reveals that art is being treated as an appendage. A similar antinomy pervades Hauser's methodology. If he really believed in the artist as a free and creative individual, he would not expect to find in everything he does the reflection of social forces. Hauser does obeisance to the "aesthetic quality" of art, that mysterious being which transcends the scientific interest of a sociologist, without suspecting that a better understanding of the aesthetic might disclose the ideological autonomy of art. Art is not a poppy or a lily, but neither does it live in a doll's house. It has a mind of its own. What it says about the world is largely a function of its own ways of saying—its own conventions, its own techniques, its own media of expression. The artist is indeed a man of action, but he is his own man.

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KENNETH BURKE

The "Independent Radical"

THIS IS AN EXCEPTIONALLY LIVELY BOOK,[1] on painting, literature, and the realm of the socio-political. It is a good brisk breeze. And it should be greeted with acclaim. Since it is a collection of essays written over many years, with notable shifts, from time to time, in the "objective situation," perhaps to do full justice we should take up all twenty chapters, one by one.

Or a good place from which to spin everything would be Chapter 11, "Character Change and the Drama," the slightly revised version of an essay originally published in the July 1932 issue of a critical quarterly then edited by James Burnham and Philip Wheelwright, *The Symposium*. This essay centers in a distinction between "personality" and "identity." The personality is one's individual character—and "whatever unity" it "maintains at the base of its transformations is something mysterious." "Identity," on the other hand, is treated primarily as a social or legal concept:

> The law is not a recognizer of persons; its judgments are applied at the end of a series of acts. With regard to individuals the law creates a fiction, that of a person who is identified by the coherence of his acts with a fact in which they have terminated (the crime or the contract) and by nothing else. The judgment is the resolution of these acts. The law visualizes the individual as a kind of actor with a role whom the court has located in the situational system of the legal code.
>
> In contrast with the person recognized by the continuity of his being, we may designate the character defined by the coherence of his acts as an "identity."

Law, drama, and religious thought are thus said to be concerned not with "personality" but with "identity" and "changes in identity" ("a 're-identification,' wherein the individual is placed in a new status, is 'reborn,' so to say, and given a new character and perhaps a new name"). Hamlet, for instance, is cited as the example of a "personality" who "is transformed into a dramatic identity . . . in response to his role —which he performs as required of him by the plot." In the beginning, "It is not a weakness of personality that impedes his action but the fact that he is a personality"; and "this character must be changed if the play is to become a tragedy."

Ideally, I'd like to trace how the pattern of thought at the basis of this basic essay (which I saluted as far back as 1937, in my *Attitudes Toward History*) remains always at the roots of Rosenberg's thinking.

[1] THE TRADITION OF THE NEW, by *Harold Rosenberg*. Horizon Press. $4.95.

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But there is a readier approach than by dealing with the problem sheerly in its terministic abstractness. That is, we might ask how the distinction between "personal" continuity and "changes in identity" is exemplified in these essays themselves, considered as the signature of a highly independent, expressive, and volatile critic who has responded with especial vigor to contemporary controversies in the realms of literature, painting, and politics.

In a bit of "personal testimony," Rosenberg testifies to having begun "under the touch of a spirit which the 'thirties banished—a spirit whose native habitat was international Paris (where none of us need have been)." However, when he "first encountered" the " 'Marxist' generation in the mid 'thirties'," with its opposition to "personal radicalism and Bohemian life," he was "too young to be solidly anchored 'in the twenties,' " and though, "like everyone else," he "became involved in Marxism," from the start his "Marxism was out of date." He was interested in Marx because he found in Marx's writings "a new image of the drama of the individual and of the mass"; and in Lenin he saw "a new kind of hero, a sort of political M. Teste." To him Marx "seemed more interested in the deities I had brought with me than in my contemporaries' Marxism," a discrepancy which "did not help me to understand them nor their vision of themselves." Later:

> As the literary leaders of the former Left flopped over, they found it increasingly easy to come to terms with older members of "our" generation, especially the more conservative ones. But not with the few who, like myself, were chronologically, as well as temperamentally, on the edge between two generations and actually strangers to both.

Many chapters of the book testify vigorously to the ways in which, as a "person," Rosenberg remained a "non-conformist," not without awareness that even non-conformism is threatened with its own peculiar kinds of conformity. He would seem happiest if he could think of himself as in a minority of a minority of a minority. And the opening chapters of the book indicate how this trait of his personality has now culminated in his identification with the "American Action Painters," for whom he is a zestful spokesman. (Characteristically, while analyzing, sloganizing, and defending such a position, he has also explicitly voiced his distrust of "positionism.")

Here are three details which, when put together, provide a good example of the author's "personality" or underlying continuity (as distinct from what might be any changes in his "identity"): (1) In an excellent dramatistic analysis of Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,* he sympathetically presents the notion that "with the elimination of myth and heroes the basic structure of the historical epic would be transformed." (2) He also has a brilliant satire on "the Communist" as a type ("made in Lenin's image," that is, in the

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image of a Communist leader whom he had at one time admired as a "hero," whereas we are now admonished against "the sign of the hero," in the Communist's "total identification" with the "total act" of Lenin's revolutionary struggle "24 hours a day"). (3) The book also contains a forceful, well-reasoned statement in protest against an article by Leslie Fiedler sanctioning the execution of the Rosenbergs. This bristling item is included in an analysis of the confession-literature ("Couch Liberalism") that blossomed during the McCarthy era. It is almost hilarious in spots, and it might well make Fiedler feel like a fool.

There is the not inconceivable possibility that, if someone wrote a book voicing one of Rosenberg's views, in reviewing it he would shift to a different view, not through sheer perversity but because, even if he himself had written the book, by the mere fact of finishing it he would have moved into another phase. Thus, in his final chapter, on such sociological laments as Whyte's *The Organization Man,* his negativism becomes transformed into a modified brand of "positive thinking" thus:

> Having accepted self-alienation in trade for social place, the post-radical intellectual can see nothing ahead but other-direction and a corporately styled personality. . . . Within these limits the deploring of "conformity" is simply an expression of self-pity. . . . With his own success achieved the only issue the intellectual can see as remaining for society is "personality." Somehow, this seems unattainable in "the dehumanized collective" in the building of which he is taking a leading part. The result is depression—and it is by the power of the depression it generates, in contrast to the smugness of the old-time boosting, that the present sociology is a force against a more radical and realistic understanding of American life.

The book thus ends on a recondite species of flag-waving, as it began by affirming that "Action Painting is the abstraction of the *moral* element in art" (in contrast with his satiric attack on "the Communist" as "first and foremost of the abstract substance of heroes").

Of all things to be said about Realism, he characteristically digs up this odd angle: "As the Hindus say, Realism is one of the fifty-seven varieties of decoration." I particularly like the sentence for reasons still to be considered. In the meantime, viewed as an intelligent, ebullient critic's realistic self-portraiture, *The Tradition of the New* is seen to be giving us, in sum, one of the several possible developments from an early estheticism, through deviant Marxism, to neo-estheticism with strong socio-political remembrances (in contrast with artists and writers to whom the new estheticism is a farewell to socio-political concerns in any form except "Farewell").

Whether history is an unfolding of the *Zeitgeist* or merely a reflection of the headlines, I think Rosenberg would have done better to retain the actual progression in which these articles were written.

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Then, as regards the wavering battle between "personality" and "identification" (for his case, we might better propose "counter-identification") we could have followed the steps consecutively, along with interesting shifts as regards the relation between artist and community. (These shifts culminate, I believe, in the notion that the community of the artist as a *person*—in contrast with the local communities with which people become *identified* from time to time—is mankind in general, as marked by some direct relation to a principle of creativity.)

I personally wish that, what with the nature of the modern weapons (or even of modern Technology in general) Rosenberg had been less uncharitable towards persons whose modes of "identification" lead them to favor better relations between U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. But in any case, it remains a simple literary fact that his antinomianism allows him a maximum number of positions from which to level his picturesque attacks. Where others may on occasion feel inclined to pull their punches, Rosenberg's catch-as-catch-can approach can catch a lot of people in awkward postures—and the resultant observations make for good comedy, than which no one likes more than I than which.

Here is a passage, in the introduction, that makes clear why I'd have liked to see the articles placed in their first order of appearance (or at least, I'd like to have some indication just what that order was):

> Whoever undertakes to create soon finds himself engaged in creating himself. Self-transformation and the transformation of others have constituted the radical interest of our century, whether in painting, psychiatry, or political action. Quite ordinary people have been tempted to assume the risk of deciding whether to continue to be what they have been or to exchange themselves to fit a more intriguing role; others have had self-substitution forced upon them.
>
> Metamorphosis involves the mechanisms of comedy and tragedy. Never before has there been such wholesale participation in the secrets of the ridiculous, the morbid and the idyllic. It is through these, however, that the physiognomy of an epoch must be recognized.

This would seem to be a "post-Marxist" restatement of the possibly "pre-Marxist" pattern I have already mentioned with regard to the early essay on character-change. Isolate "transformation" and its verbs, then spread out, to include such synonyms and related concepts as: formation, self-substitution, metamorphosis, change, turn, conversion, self-creation, self-recognition, self-identification, self-definition, self-transcendence, self-displacement, resurrection, self-disguise, disinheritance, alienation, estrangement, revelation, revolution (the "constant revolutionizing" of poetry's "tradition"; evolution is mentioned but seldom), personal revolt, tension, inner contradictions (when poetry encounters "an inner contradiction as well as a practical one," it becomes "loaded with generative power"), "a new moment in which the painter will realize his total personality," Action Painting as

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a succession of moral choices in which the painting has "talked back" to the painter and so contributed to his unfolding—such is the central cluster of terms around which Rosenberg's version of The Development through the spirits of time and tide seems to be constructed. Add also the many statements that present the dialectic of the new art as a kind of scientific experiment, a position Rosenberg upholds even as regards torn minds like Baudelaire's, Poe's, and Rimbaud's, whose pronouncements are quoted as perfect examples of his views. The estheticizing of the political revolution is completed in the formula: "Modern poems are often notes on a secret experimental activity conducted by the poet in order, in the phrase of Rilke, to 'transform the earth,'" a statement that should probably be read in the light of another remark: "Today, everyone is aware that revolution in art and revolution in politics are not the same thing and may even be in opposition to each other."

The book begins with some of his latest writings, on the subject of "Action Painting." Rosenberg is credited with having coined the term, "which is now being used from London to Tokyo, with as many different meanings as there are writers to misunderstand it." For a critic with so barbed a tongue, he is surprisingly generous in his tributes to such "Coonskinism" (which he opposes to traditionalist "Redcoatism," in an amusing transformation of his earlier concern with Reds). Not without uneasiness, I would approach this aspect of his theorizing thus:

Painters, I take it, have three choices: They can illustrate, decorate, or doodle—and traditionally their canvases have been, in varying proportions, mixtures of all three (along with sophistications whereby: the "illustrations" could imitate attitudes as well as things; the "decorations" could extend into the realm of the ugly; and the sort of enactment thought to be implicit in the sheer lines, forms, and colors of a picture, its nature as a dignified kind of "doodle," would vary with the critic's notions about "kinaesthesia," "empathy," and the like.)[2] One might conceive of "Action Painting" as "abstract" in the sense that it makes for the efficient stressing of a limited field, generally gravitating towards the dignified kind of doodle, though there are often appealing elements of decoration and its sophistications (the result being an "unStyle or anti-Style" that can also use "the mistake, the accident, the spontaneous, the incomplete, the absent," and that often has forms fragmentarily suggestive of illustration whether or not the artist so intended them). Rosenberg, if I understand him, sees

[2] Once you extend the concept of "illustration" to the point where it includes the imitation of a state of mind, I can see how such art as the "geometric style" in Greek vase-painting might be classed under all three heads. And one may doubt whether an "illustration" could possibly be good, even as illustration, unless a "doodle" were implicit in it. "Calligraphy," I take it, is often used in ways that could cover all three aspects, as a more or less clearly indicated something is represented *in terms of* doodly-decorative gesture which, in various modifications, is maintained at least for the duration of the one "action."

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such art as a kind of symbolic action expressive of creativity in general rather than simply being the Rorschach-like portraits of individual psychoses. For although the permanent "revolution" of such painting has "re-entered America in the form of personal revolts," and though in this collection he adapts a statement by Stevens to the effect that poetry "is a process of the personality of the poet," Rosenberg does not consider the results "personal" in the sense of sheer "self-expression."

I take it that he particularly likes such art because it promises to involve the painter's "total personality" rather than sheer changes in "identity," though unfortunately, on p. 31, he seems to use "identity" and "personality" as synonyms, in contrast with the essay (earlier in time but later in the book) where the terms are clearly and schematically distinguished. If I have got him wrong here, I have not done so in any attempt to catch him in an inconsistency. The distinction between the pure "personality" in a "revolutionary" Action Painting and "identification" in terms of some socio-political role (be it Left, Right, or Center) seems to me technically at the bottom of his preference (though someone writing of it in terms of what he calls "depth politics" would probably accuse him simply of shifting to much less risky kinds of "revolution"). In any case, he says that the "mark" of such painting is "moral tension in detachment from moral or esthetic certainties"—and he sees its constant succession of moral choices being taken under the guidance of the hortatory negative (the painter "must exercise in himself a constant No" . . . "Art is not, not not not not" . . . surely the esthetic counterpart of a Mosaic decalogue, heralding a movement which at its center "was away from, rather than toward").

Though Rosenberg describes such esthetic "conversion" as "religious," at the same time he is militantly insistent that it is "secular." Disputing Maritain, he proclaims the "revision of the profession of poetry through the scientific conversion of divine Being into definable states of consciousness." (We have already noted that he classed outright religious conversion under the head of "identity" rather than "personality." It is a terministic alignment which some might object to, but at this point I am merely trying to characterize his calculus.)

An objection that I might raise would enter from a slightly different angle. I think that Rosenberg's insistence upon the sheer secularity of his position conceals somewhat the nature of that position. For, technically, the relation between the "material" and the "spiritual" (or to use his word, "psychic") remains much the same (so far as symbolic action on a canvas is concerned) regardless of whether one views the Ultimate ground of the esthetic act in terms of the natural or the supernatural. Technically, the basic distinction is between the *taste* of an orange (which would be "material," existential) and the *words*, "taste of an orange" (which would correspond to the spiritual, and would name an essence). Rosenberg puts the issue thus:

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> If the ultimate subject matter of all art is the artist's psychic state or tension . . . , that state may be represented either through the image of a thing or through an abstract sign. The innovation of Action Painting was to dispense with the *representation* of the state in favor of *enacting* it in physical movement. The action on the canvas became its own representation. This was possible because action, being made of both the psychic and the material, is by its nature a sign.

And a bit later he quotes from Rilke, "Dance the orange."

Now, once you grant that one must dance the orange *in terms of signs,* you are technically in the realm of "spirit," quite as with the *words,* "taste of an orange," in contrast with the tasting in its actual physical immediacy. The stress upon esthetic *secularity,* as contrasted with a possible ultimate *religious* dimension, can make the artistic "experiment" look as though it could attain fuller physical gratifications than is really the case. Insofar as it is a system of "signs," "Action Painting" is no more physical than any other kind of painting (except to the extent that it may eliminate some *traditional aspects* of what we have come to expect as signs). "Dance the orange" be damned. Physically, the test is: *Pick* the orange and *eat* it. Or dance a dance and paint a painting. On the other hand, as regards the element of sheer physicality involved in any motion, if the stroke of a pen or a brush is bold, is it any less bold through being used to represent an object?

The main point is: Once you're in the realm of sheer *signs,* their "spirituality" is of a sort whereby "secular" and "religious" terminologies overlap—and any militant stress upon the secular as though in this regard it were quite different from the religious merely obscures the situation, thereby encouraging one to hope for kinds of fulfilment or gratification which simply cannot be got from art, or from any symbol-system as such. In brief, along the lines of my own special interests, I feel that Rosenberg's arguments for *Action Painting,* good as they are, need rounding out by further reference to the resources and embarrassments of *symbolic action in general.*

In conclusion, I should add: One great virtue of this book which I have completely failed to indicate is its high percentage of incidental hits. I have always liked that old Western "Coonskinism": "It's good to be shifty in a new country." Rosenberg keeps his thinking new by keeping on the move—so that things keep getting said with a flick that makes them interesting. His paradoxical title is a good instance of his mentality, as are expressions like "the herd of independent minds," or his asking whether "a consistently revolutionary attitude" can itself be called "revolutionary." "Art kills only the dead," he says, on the grounds that "Revolution in art lies not in the will to destroy but in the revelation of what already is destroyed." He is aware of the tangle that comes of "choosing choice itself" rather than

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making specific choices. As soon as he begins talking of "kitsch," you can feel sure that he'll round things out by getting to "kitsch criticism of kitsch." And, typically he writes: *"An End to Innocence* adds perhaps the final dimension to penitence. Fiedler's line is: We have been guilty of being innocent."

I could cite many more such. But let's end on this suggestive proportion: American life in general is to "individual life in the U.S." as a billboard is to "something nameless that takes place in the weeds behind it." The billboard, I take it, would call upon us to "identify" ourselves with something or other; but what goes on back there in the weeds would be "personal."

COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Sirs,

I really must object to Richard Foster's tasteless and pointless attack on the Chicago Critics which concludes his article on the New Criticism in your Summer 1959 issue. Does he have to show how good his favorites are by showing how bad he thinks the Neo-Aristotelians are?

He objects first to their style, and quotes two of what are supposed to be horrible examples. They are taken out of context, of course, which illustrates exactly the strategy of the many people who have attacked and are still attacking the New Critics for *their* jargon and ugliness of style. Will Mr. Foster defend the germanicism of Mrs. Langer and Kenneth Burke, even as he attacks Olson and MacLean for their "pseudophilosophic style"? Richards once told me that he was unable to read Mrs. Langer, and Brooks has complained in print that Blackmur is becoming more unreadable every day.

This game of complaining about style, though, can get pretty snooty, and since I for one rarely feel confident that I am writing well or gracefully, it would be best to push in to Mr. Foster's second objection. "But after all the noise and exertion of its construction, the Neo-Aristotelian factory produced hardly anything—a lively essay or two against New Critics—and it now seems to have shut down altogether, though presumably it still stands firm." These remarks reveal the pathetic inadequacy and provincialism of many of our bright young critics who absorbed Richards and Eliot with their mother's milk but who know nothing else. For some reason, the Chicago Critics are not commonly published in the fashionable quarterlies, and their books, when they are reviewed therein, are almost always received with hostility. It is true that the Chicagoans have published only three books thus far—*Critics and Criticism,* Crane's *The Languages of Criticism,* and Olson's *Dylan Thomas*—but surely these amount to more than "a

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lively essay or two against new critics." They, and their students, have also published dozens of articles, but they are working against the spirit of the times and so have not achieved a full hearing.

But this matter of quantity is another diversionary tactic. What Mr. Foster really objects to is that the Chicago Critics are not poets. I could reply that Elder Olson, at least, is a poet, but this is not the point. Whether or not we agree that they bring sufficient "romantic frenzy" to their criticism, whether or not we agree even that as theorists they have something to say, the Neo-Aristotelians have accomplished one important service: they have shown, both in their practice as well as in their theory, that criticism is or should be a matter of alternative possibilities, that there are questions which can be asked other than those to which the New Critics have accustomed us and that there are other ways of answering even those questions which the New Critics have asked.

Is Mr. Foster unacquainted with the non-Chicago objections to the New Criticism voiced by Kathleen Nott, Karl Shapiro, Wallace Douglas, John Holloway, Frank Kermode, Robert Marsh, Rosamund Tuve, Donald Davie, and others? Or with the doubts of the otherwise pro-New Critical Murry Krieger? I don't think so. But the point is that he has not allowed their work to influence his thinking. He is even less aware of what the Chicago Critics are saying than his admired John Crowe Ransom in "Humanism at Chicago." And it is this dogmatism, this unwillingness to listen to the other fellow, which vitiates the work of the disciples of the New Critics still more than that of their masters.

NORMAN FRIEDMAN

Storrs, Conn.

Dear Sirs,

Mr. Friedman is himself an apt and strenuous critic, and it is an honor to have irritated him. But he is wrong about a couple of things—the "attack" wasn't pointless, its point was clearly made; and I don't believe it was tasteless, unless lightness is out of taste in academe. And of course it wasn't even an attack, really, but just a little puff that I knew perfectly well wouldn't blow the factory down.

This was my point: the factory approach to literature—the building of critical machines that operate to press all insight and sensibility into "method." The New Critics once had to worry about this in their own work, but despite Dr. Crane's condemnation of Cleanth Brooks's "monism," I think they have kept pretty free of the deadening effects of "methodolatry," as, quite obviously, the Chicagoans have not. And the variety of the critical questions and answers they have been concerned with has always been underestimated. Mr. Friedman mentions Elder Olson as a poet; I think Olson is a good poet—his work has been tough and free in a period when the leading younger poets have been

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sentimental and stylishly formal. But when he turns to criticism he stops being a man of letters and begins pulling the levers and pushing the buttons of the Neo-Aristotelian tabulator, and the writing comes out like something from the olden tyme translated by Butcher. Most of the time this officialese is just pedantic camouflage for the most simple minded banalities. I can't resist quoting Olson again for illustration. This is on "unexpectedness" in drama, from "An Outline of Poetic Theory":

> Expectation is the active entertainment of the opinion that something is necessary or probable at a given time, place, in certain relations, etc. The audience must infer, and infer incorrectly; they have the premises, so to speak, for otherwise what happens would be improbable; but they cannot connect them to infer correctly, for otherwise what happens would be expected. Since they do not infer the probable, and do infer the improbable, two things must be noted: the causes of wrong inference and the causes of failure to infer rightly. Since the premises must be considered together for inference and since the audience will reason only from premises which they actively entertain and take to be true, failure to infer will be due to (1) forming no opinion or forming a contradictory one, so that one or both of the premises will not be used; (2) failure to collect the premises, although both are entertained; (3) failure to infer correctly, although both are entertained and collected.

And so on and on. Can't you just see that audience collecting and reasoning away at those premises, and can't you just feel that expectation mounting?

I haven't read Olson's book on Thomas, and I haven't by any means exhausted all of his articles, or Crane's, or the other Chicagoans' work, or their students'. But I have slogged around in *Critics and Criticism* (which I take to be consciously representative), and I suspect that whenever Chicagoans are good critics they are reacting and thinking and writing like people rather than Chicagoans. It should have been clear from my words on the Neo-Aristotelians that I am not just complaining about "style," as Mr. Friedman says, but about the relative mechanicalness and deadness of perception in their work, of which their mechanicalness or deadness of expression is perhaps an index. I don't know about the "fashionable quarterlies," but I think we should not forget that *Modern Philology* (known as *MP*, or *Modern Penology*, on the irreverent fringes of pedantry) has been the main outlet for articles and reviews by Neo-Aristotelians, and that perhaps one of the reasons they don't get a wider hearing is that literary people wouldn't first seek light and refreshment in the pages of that ominous publication. The fact is that Mr. Friedman *does* read *The Hudson Review*. Mr. Friedman has a point, though, about one of my sentences when he complains about my seeming to underestimate the quantity of Neo-Aristotelian writing. I wanted to suggest only that they were not very often "lively," and then usually when they were attacking other critics

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(Olson and Crane), that they had spent a lot more words building their machinery than they had using it for criticism, and finally that since the publication of *Critics and Criticism* several years ago (the monument or "factory") we haven't heard much from them as a "school" of critics pushing a cause.

The many other things Mr. Friedman has to say I can answer only in a scattered way. As for quoting out of context, that is a tiresome and feeble charge. One always, when quoting, quotes "out of context," and people object to your doing so only when they don't approve of your attitude toward the quotation. Further context wouldn't help these quotations any, or make them seem either more sensible or less funny. And would Mr. Friedman be able to maintain that I have said anything about these quotations that is not borne out by a simple reading of them?

As for Mrs. Langer and Kenneth Burke, I think Mrs. Langer has written two books of rather vague, semi-popularized romantic philosophy (which is probably the reason Richards couldn't read her—he has been able to read awfully well much more substantial and difficult stuff), and I think Burke is a brilliant thinker, a free spirit, and though "hard," one of the most graceful and wittiest writers of critical prose that the age has seen. It is the agility of Burke's mind, not his "jargon" or "germanicism," that makes him hard for most of us. Burke doesn't need defending—he is his own defense. As for Mrs. Langer, I think she has defenders—disciples—enough.

And as for Mr. Friedman's list of non-Chicago objectors, most of them are on my own list, which is a lot longer, beginning with Bush and ending with Winters, and with Foster somewhere in the middle. I don't want to bore Mr. Friedman with personal bibliography, but I feel I should put on the record that I have several times written about the New Critics in a vein of skepticism and scrutiny. Two recent articles apparently looked enough like "attacks" to elicit approving correspondence from a couple of the anti-New Critics on Mr. Friedman's list.

Though there would be plenty of exceptions, I feel that I have learned most about literature and how to read it from the New Critics and their followers. But I think they have their weaknesses, as my article should have conveyed to Mr. Friedman. If I had to conjure an image of the ideal critic, I think he would look like D. H. Lawrence or Ford Madox Ford, because I think the most valuable criticism is least system-bound, is most freely responsive in all the human ways that count, from aesthetic to moral, and is written, however technical its content may be, as "essay"—the vehicle most capable of sustaining and expressing that free responsiveness. All of this seems to be what Chicago and Mr. Friedman are implicitly against, and I just can't see why.

RICHARD FOSTER

Minneapolis, Minn.

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Dear Sirs,

"There is no such thing as a music critic: only comedians . . . ," writes Marvin Mudrick in his review of B. H. Haggin's *Conversations with Toscanini,* in your last issue. Bang! Still, if that were buckshot I could take it—I have blasted off in the same bore myself often enough—in a way that I will not take it as concentrated fire. Concentrated by means of an exception, Mr. Haggin, the one music critic "who has demonstrated, for over a third of a century, his understanding of the responsibilities of criticism," and so on. That takes the remark right out of the area of windy rhetoric and into the area of mild polemic. For with Mr. Haggin as his decoy, as the one serious American music critic and the rest of us as comedians, Mr. Mudrick is not only ruffling our feathers, but also spreading a serious (to me) misunderstanding of what music criticism is about.

You will recall, gentlemen, that I had this out in Volume the First of your magazine; it was my maiden effort. "One would expect the readers of the intellectual magazines to be potentially a most receptive audience for intelligent music criticism," so I wrote, "but actually they get to see very little of it. This perhaps explains why so many of them are impressed with B. H. Haggin of *The Nation* [then: now of *Hudson* and *Yale Review* and *The New Republic*], who can hardly provide them with more than prestige tastes. There is a certain stubborn anti-intellectuality about Mr. Haggin, and though he has much that is refreshing and irreverent to say about the ballet, electronic engineering, and especially musical performance, he is simply not to be taken seriously as a critic of *music.*" (Italics are new. N. B.!) "Always ready with a black-and-white judgment about a composer or a particular work, he is singularly reluctant to discuss music in any more detail, unless by quotation; and a single original illumination is of more use to the reader than a whole catalogue of the generally accepted tastes among modern musicians . . . " I quote all this because it is concise, because nothing has changed, and (frankly) because I do not have the heart to plunge into the argument all over again, to revitalize it. Mr. Haggin has been decent to me since those attacks; and I have other ghostly fathers to exorcise. For me the issue was closed, but I see that it is not closed for Mr. Mudrick.

If he likes, he can check me out by reference to Mr. Haggin's "Opera and Ballet Chronicle" in your last issue, on pages 261-266. Nothing has changed; Mr. Haggin still provides black-and-white judgements and no illumination on the music. As ever, he is doubtless right in his thumbs-up-or-down reaction to performances, mostly far from memorable, that took place six months ago and three thousand miles from the lidos where Mr. Mudrick and I profess. But of the music itself, we learn merely that *Ballo* has some superb parts (which?), that the Sleepwalking Scene in *Macbeth* is creative, eloquent, incandescent, and that one should conduct with plasticity and continuous tension. On the Bing-

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Callas fracas Mr. Haggin sounds wonderfully sensible; but criticism isn't involved here, certainly. He rightly praises the Met *Wozzeck,* but grants no more than one adjective ("discordant") to that crucial, shattering, problematic work of art itself. I definitely believe him, rather than Winthrop Sergeant, on the American Opera Season at the City Center, though I should have tried to distinguish between the purely meretricious in Floyd's *Wuthering Heights* and the experimentalism of Weisgall's *Six Characters,* had I been present, and tried to give my readers something to talk about during the second cocktail. Mr. Haggin remarks that in *Medea* Eileen Farrell sometimes sang less than beautifully; ho hum; and that the piece should be done in the French version: why? why won't he tell us *something* about the music? Tovey says that *The Flying Dutchman* was the most serious opera written since *Medea,* a remark as exasperatingly brief as any of Haggin's, but more stimulating to thought and perception than the entire Chronicle put together.

The point is so plain that I am almost timid to make it: a music critic should concentrate on criticism of music, not on musical performance, just as a dramatic critic should center his attention on plays and playwrights, not actors. Excellence in performance is the realization of the work of art from the page to actual sound; but how can one judge this excellence without insight into the work of art itself? And so how can one write relevantly about performance without writing about

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music? The fact that most of what we read about music consists of newspaper and news-magazine reviews which dwell on performance (performance being news and box-office while music usually isn't) has nothing to do with the responsibilities of criticism in the sense that Mr. Mudrick and I would automatically take. Another responsibility, by the way, is to take some account of contemporary music, which Mr. Haggin (like Toscanini) has always avoided. I am saying, in short, that Mr. Haggin has profound limitations as a critic. Beyond them, he can be judged with the next man, but the first thing to see is where, significantly, he doesn't work at all.

In the end, Mr. Mudrick commends Haggin's book sonorously to "those who are interested in the art of musical performance." Well, those who are interested in the art of music will need to look elsewhere for critical writing. Next to no real music criticism appears in the literary magazines, unless you want to count my own stuff, but respectable traces of it can be found in *Music and Letters, The Score, MLA Notes,* the back of *The Musical Quarterly,* the back of record jackets (select with care!), and—yes, definitely—in *The Nation.* Mind you, I could not possibly commend all this, for I consider most of it haphazard and feeble; still, you will at least see writers stumbling in the right direction. As for that fine rolling last sentence of Mr. Mudrick's, once again: if it contains the patronizing implication that performance is the only field for music criticism, and that Mr. Haggin's work is the best our art can support—*if,* I say—then I hope he will reconsider, recant, and stop writing (like Koussevitzky) about subjects that he hasn't thought about much.

JOSEPH KERMAN

Berkeley, California

Dear Sirs,

Mr. Kerman's quarrel is not really with me, but with those people—culpable ignoramuses, by his own account—who have published and encouraged Haggin all these years: the editors of *Hound and Horn, The Nation,* the *New York Herald-Tribune, The New Republic, Yale Review,* and *Hudson Review;* not to mention such musical specialists—better qualified, according to Mr. Kerman's stern unionism?—as W. J. Turner and (once upon a time) Virgil Thomson. For Mr. Kerman says that Haggin is "not a critic of *music*"; and this is the job which the former have paid and the latter have praised him for doing. So Mr. Kerman's letter (he mentions Toscanini only once, in parenthesis) would be more proper if it simply rebuked the editors of *Hudson Review* for publishing a Music Chronicle written by a man he regards as manifestly unqualified.

But Mr. Kerman has his reasons. One half of his letter is the writh-

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ing of offended *amour propre:* he complains that I move from "windy rhetoric" to "mild polemic" when I dismiss "the rest of us [music critics] as comedians" and when I say that Haggin is "the one music critic 'who has demonstrated. . . .' " But I do not say so; Mr. Kerman's inference is incorrect; and his carefully accurate and misleading paraphrase-plus-quotation from me (note where *my* words begin) is the tipoff. On p. 315, I make fun of most contemporary music criticism (the techniques are called irony and hyperbole; Mr. Kerman knows them, though they are not taught at music schools); on p. 316, I do not make fun of Haggin. Mr. Kerman's inference is his own, and since upon it—as he himself says—rests his sense of provocation, perhaps his letter ought not to have been written. But his feelings are hurt: he goes on to expose shyly his own claim to fame, and tells us—rather astonishingly, after his complaint about Haggin's failure to be specific—that all sorts of good music criticism ("most of it," though, "haphazard and feeble"!) appear in various professional magazines and on "the back of record jackets (select with care!)." I look forward to another letter to the editors in which Mr. Kerman fulfills the responsibilities of criticism by telling the public just which record jackets, just which issues and which paragraphs in which magazines; but I think it is cruel of him to keep us cliffhanging.

The other half of Mr. Kerman's letter is the same old absolutist argument about the nature of criticism (not just music criticism), on which—since he seems to recognize only professional competence—he will doubtless allow me to speak. The school-bred musicologist, like the academic literary critic, is liable to confuse knowledgeability about technique with enlightening responsiveness to structure and detail; there is no snob quite so hopeless as the art-snob, because he does know *something*—though it isn't the work of art itself. The act of criticism is as likely to be indicative and suggestive as expansive and rhetorical ("rhetoric" is not necessarily a nasty word): the only test of the reliability of the critic is the experience of the reader.

MARVIN MUDRICK

MARVIN MUDRICK

[*In a further communication to the editors, Mr. Mudrick explained that since, because of his removal to England, he had not at the time of writing received a copy of the Summer issue, he was unable to reply to Mr. Kerman's specific criticisms of Mr. Haggin's* Chronicle *in that issue.*]

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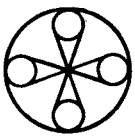

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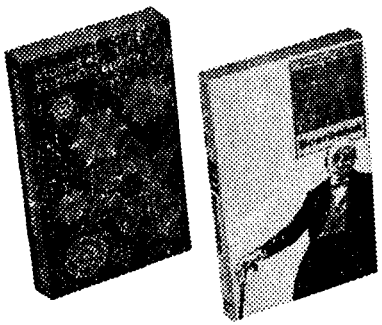

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